Commentary

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A World Without Leaders

Paul Johnson

Do the Jews Have a Future? / Robert S. Wistrich

Under the Rising Sun / Charles Horner

The Politics of Dissent / Gertrude Himmelfarb

Matthew Arnold and Us / John Gross

Family Reunion / Walter Laqueur

Genet Among the Palestinians / Martin Kramer

Welfare Feminism / Midge Decter

Hypocrisy on Haiti / Joshua Muravchik

Books in Review: Andrew Ferguson / Naomi Munson / Daniel J. Silver / Jeffrey Marsh / Terry Teachout

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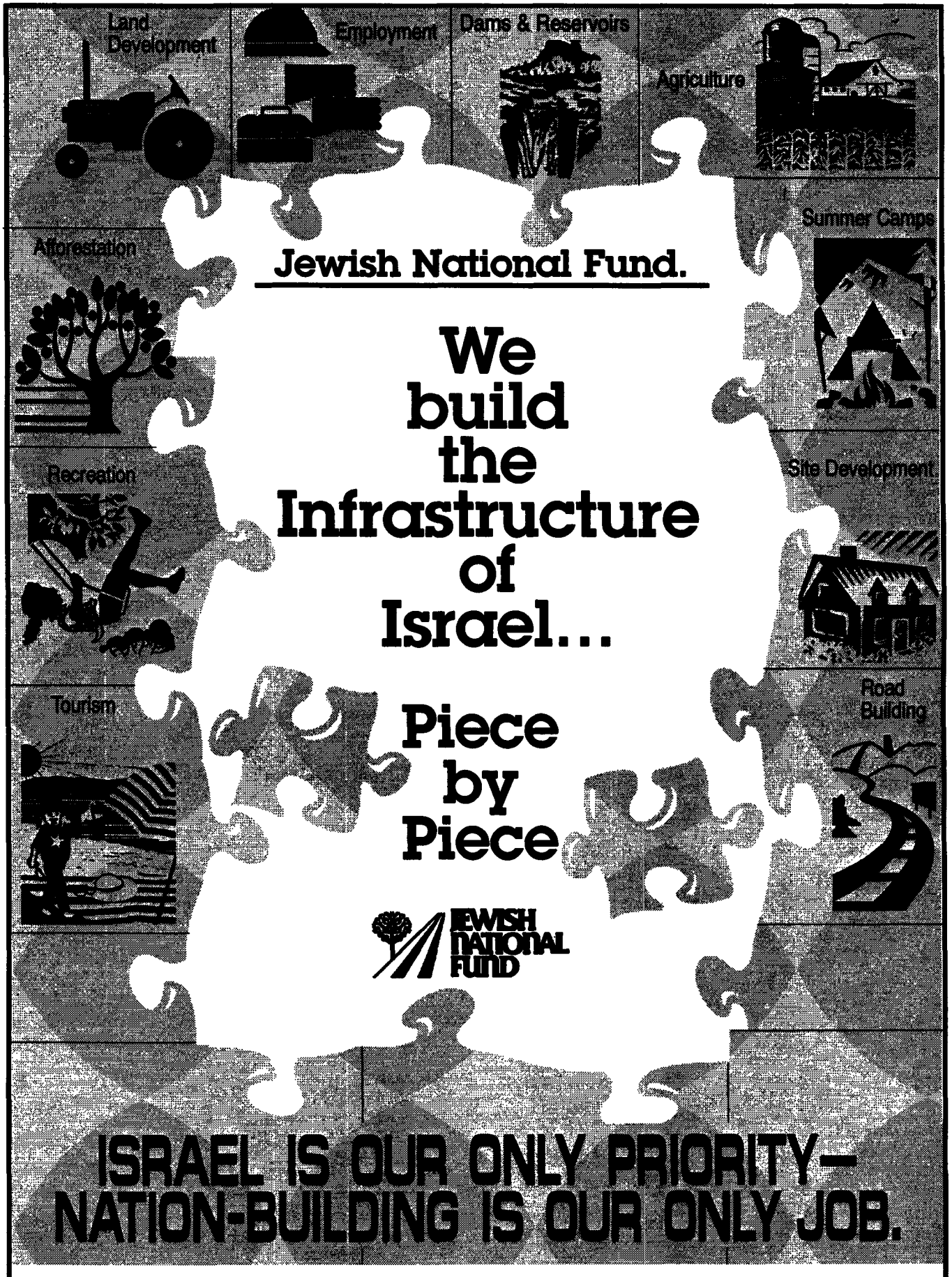

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Commentary®

VOLUME 98 NUMBER ONE JULY 1994

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Letters from Readers

Black Anti-Semitism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As Arch Puddington so eloquently describes it in "Black Anti-Semitism & How It Grows" [April], the seeds of black discontent were planted long ago in the halls of ivy. Once it became clear that special victim status was conferred on black students, it was no longer possible to apply either the rule of law or common sense to their actions. Black students were allowed to vent their rage in a manner considered irresponsible when employed by others. Separate dormitory facilities, for example, have been given to black students at many colleges when such a gesture in the past would have been deemed a violation of the Civil Rights Acts and an affront to the basic purpose of higher education. . . .

That blatant anti-Semitic attacks are now countenanced tacitly or overtly by some university administrators is hardly surprising. Such a response represents the continuing effort at rationalization on the part of the universities. I have heard it said by otherwise sensible scholars that black students are "justifiably angry" or that the rules which apply to others do not necessarily apply to them.

By employing a policy of inverted racial preference, university leaders have inadvertently promoted activities they ordinarily abhor. Standards of right and wrong have gone through the cauldron of racial politics and come out as pedagogical relativism. Can anyone seriously imagine a university administrator today who would sanction a Ku Klux Klan meeting on campus? Why then should these self-same administrators accept the hate espoused by the Nation of Islam? The answer to that question goes back to affirmative-action policies, special victim status and all that it confers on black students, and the pusillanimity of many university administrators and professors who refuse to speak out against the racism and hatred that are espoused by some black students and all too many black leaders.

HERB LONDON
New York University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have been following the analysis of black anti-Semitism in COMMENTARY and elsewhere—refined discussions of whether black anti-Semitism derives from Christianity, Islam, or what not—whereas the answer seems to me quite simple.

I notice that many blacks also resent Asians, and subject Asian shopkeepers to vicious harassment. Clearly, the Jews are a very successful American minority. In contrast, blacks are relatively and in the aggregate a conspicuously unsuccessful American minority. Some, even many, blacks are furious at the contrast. Black anti-Semitism, like black anti-Asianism, flows from *ressentiment*, like Iago's hatred of Cassio's beauty.

JEFFREY HART
Lyme, New Hampshire

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a Ph.D. candidate who involuntarily has helped fund the visits of Steve Cokely and other black activists to my campus in recent years, I read Arch Puddington's trenchant article with great interest. His otherwise excellent piece, however, fails adequately to explain, Why the Jews? Why, in other words, have some black rabble-rousers off and on campuses chosen Jews as the primary target of their vindictive rhetoric?

Mr. Puddington is correct that Jewish academics are numbered prominently among those defending traditional scholarly standards. Nonetheless, this seems like a rather weak explanation for such a virulent phenomenon. After all, other Jewish academics, perhaps motivated by reflexive political liberalism, aid and abet the worst excesses of multiculturalism in its campus form. And, strictly speaking, most of the "traditionalists" are not Jewish at all. Nor does the rhetoric of the black activists themselves, as far as I know, consciously acknowledge such a reason for their hatred. . . .; it seems odd that they would not have emphasized this as a chief example of Jewish antipathy toward the black people and their struggle.

The primary reason for singling out Jews probably has a great deal more to do with the larger political strategy of Farrakhan *et al.*, which extends far beyond the cam-

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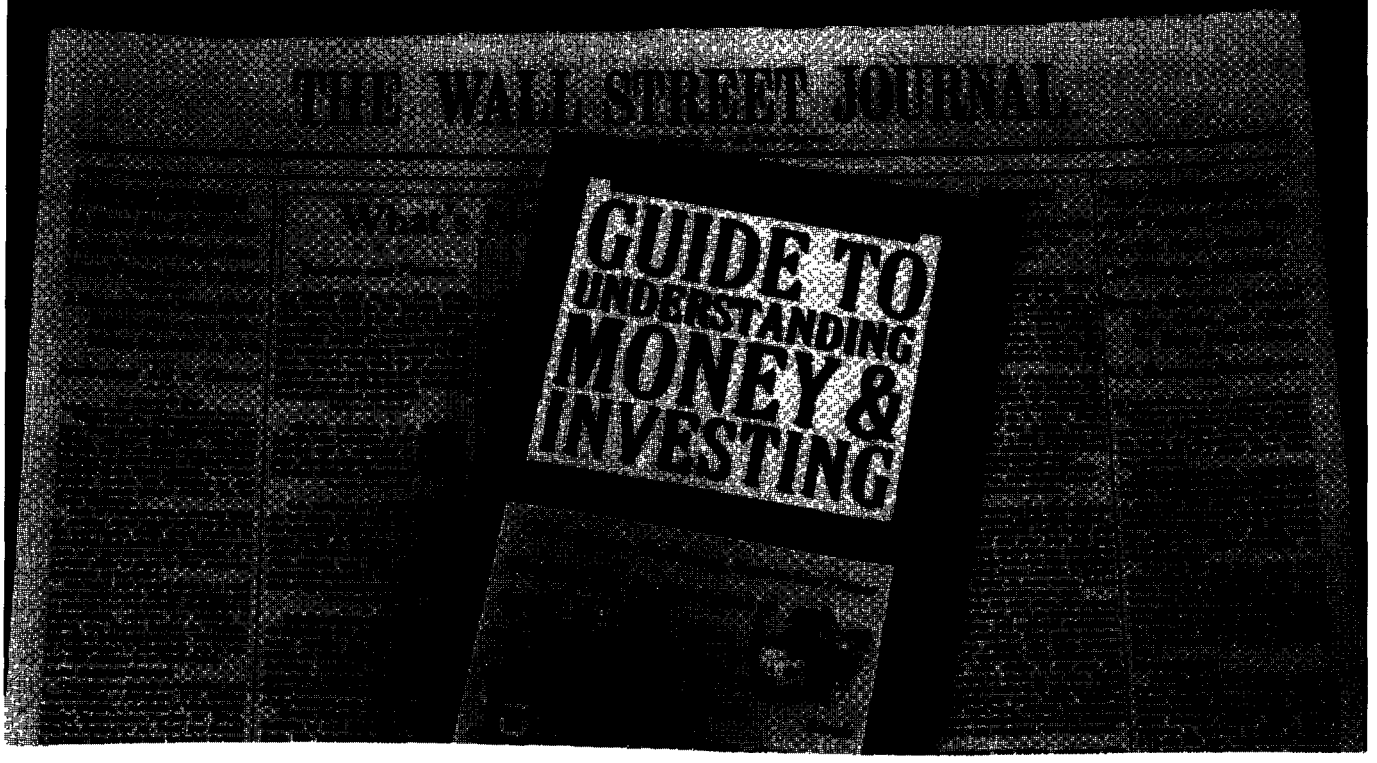

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pus arena. Farrakhan and his ilk survive and thrive by creating and reinforcing blacks' suspicion of whites, or by bolstering the culture of grievance in general. Jews, as the white community traditionally most sympathetic to black aspirations, and most committed physically and financially to their realization, must be demonized in order to undermine the lingering comprehension that Jews are white, Jews have helped blacks, and, therefore, perhaps whites are not intrinsically evil, nor do they inherently wish blacks harm. That goal explains why Farrakhan must mock the Jewish role in the civil-rights movement as merely using blacks for "cannon fodder." The notion that evil (and virtue) is group-based, rather than a product of individual responsibility, of course, is the essence of the multiculturalist credo.

As reported recently in the *New York Times*, the Nation of Islam has actively sought and won federal contracts for public-housing security without undergoing the usual competitive-bidding procedure (Mr. Puddington refers to other projects for which the Nation is soliciting government contracts). Does Farrakhan realize that a similar demonization of all whites—as opposed to merely Jews—would undermine his attempt to secure tax dollars to support his movement? Would universities' tolerance for hosting and funding this hateful nonsense diminish if the larger white community were more consistently targeted? Universities are complacent about anti-Semitic rantings since they know Jewish students are unlikely to band together to protest, destroy property, and occupy the administration buildings. Nor do Jews constitute a "protected minority," according to the diversity gurus. Thus do university administrators, for nearly 30 years a largely spineless breed concerned less with scholarship and propriety than with bad publicity, coddle this blatant race prejudice in their midst.

The larger problem is that universities increasingly provide a home for unwholesome ideas and trends that seek to undermine American society. This home is provided under the aegis of a politicized "transformationist" ethic that views the universities' mission as changing the sick society in a more "progressive" fashion. Instead of being debated according to traditional notions of reason, logic, and evidence, these "ideas" are enshrined as truths and rewarded with "academic" departments reinforced by poisonous and well-paid speakers, and in general granted a status immune to any challenge. Farrakhan *et al.* are not the problem; they are particularly venomous symptoms of the prevailing rot.

PAULA S. TUCHMAN
Minneapolis, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Arch Puddington's excellent article on black anti-Semitism correctly places much of the blame on academic administrators, white as well as black, who promote the fraudulently misnamed "multicultural" or "diversity" agenda. As Mr. Puddington says, this "works not to bridge differences, but to promote a sense of minority grievance"—and, I would add, a corresponding sense among the majority of a guilt that invites and condones even the most outrageous behavior by the aggrieved minority.

Black anti-Semitism is a specific variety of the reverse racism that so-called multiculturalism teaches. If there is any doubt that multiculturalism does teach reverse racism, one need only look at the New Jersey Project and the writings of its director, Paula Rothenberg. This is a piece of evidence—almost a "smoking gun"—that should be added to Mr. Puddington's argument. It helps explain why Khalid Muhammad's obscenities are applauded on New Jersey campuses. And not only in New Jersey. For while this project is funded in large part by New Jersey taxpayers, it has a national presence as well.

The New Jersey Project is "a statewide curriculum-transformation project" that promotes a variety of programs officially intended to combat racism and/or sexism. In fact, its director espouses reverse racism and this is easily documented. For example, in the introduction to her anthology, *Racism and Sexism: An Integrated Study*, Rothenberg begins by claiming not to have defined racism and sexism in advance but to have allowed such definitions to emerge from the study—in contrast, she says, to "traditional courses." But then she points out—in advance (pp. 6-7)—that all of the readings "agree that racism and sexism share the following common elements." The first such element is that "Racism involves the subordination of people of color by white people." Lest the implication be missed, she proceeds to deny that blacks can be racists, even if they "discriminate against" and "hate" whites. This is, in short, a racist definition of racism. It is a recipe for the Khalid Muhammads and Farrakhans.

Another common element condemns virtually all whites to racism, no matter what. For racism, she says, can be "unconscious" and "unintentional" and, furthermore, "racism and sexism pervade American culture . . . they are learned at an early age and reinforced throughout life by a variety of institutions and experiences that are part of growing up and living in the United States." (The United States must be one awful place!)

What lies behind this bizarrely skewed analysis of racism is Rothenberg's assertion that racism "requires prejudice plus power"—together with the unstated, Marxist assumption that power is not exercised by individuals but by classes. All whites have power, no blacks do; therefore, any white can be a racist but no black can. Race and sex have become surrogates for Marx's working class, the latter having disloyally formed an ardent attachment to free enterprise.

The doctrine that racism requires power is in fact ubiquitous among multiculturalists. The same definition of racism has cropped up in "sensitivity-training" sessions around the country. And who is more powerful than the Jews? Right? So the old stereotypes, fears, and hatreds find a new purchase on life.

Unfortunately, Rothenberg's text is used not only in New Jersey but nationwide, even, or especially, in required freshman courses in English composition. . . . The New Jersey Project itself will, we hope, meet a swift death, as Governor Christine Todd Whitman pares fat from the state's budget. For while the amount of money it and similar projects, like the Multicultural Studies Project and the newly-formed Institute for Prejudice Reduction, require is relatively small, these projects foment the very social dislocations—virulent anti-Semitism among them—they pretend to address, and will cost New Jersey and its citizens much more in the long run.

THOMAS SHORT
Titusville, New Jersey

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To the Editor of Commentary:

Senator Daniel P. Moynihan and the columnist Charles Krauthammer have recently written (respectively) about defining deviance "down" and "up" in order to deny and distract us from our loss of values and compassion. Arch Puddington clearly demonstrates that black anti-Semitism (and its recent manifestations in diversity and multicultural programs on college campuses) is part of a long-successful method of all anti-Semites to deny accountability for their actions and distract us from their own irresponsibility. Mr. Puddington also correctly believes that it would be wiser for Jews to stop "dialoguing" (on or off campus) with rabble-rousers and bigots who are further encouraged by Jewish passivity and willingness to "discuss" outrageous occurrences.

Sheldon C. Seller
Riverton, Connecticut

To the Editor of Commentary:

I never thought I would live through it again. The events I saw in Germany in the 20's and 30's . . . , when Jew-baiting and hatred of Jews swept German universities, are being copied with vengeful intensity by American universities. . . . Today it is Kean College; it used to be Berlin University. A sense of foreboding is in order. Where will it all end?

Arch Puddington asks for a reevaluation of certain policies, but he will have to reckon with an entrenched Jewish bureaucracy which has all along ignored fundamental laws of social life and is still chasing after a harmonious relationship with blacks. . . . It is a hard fact, but we will have to go it alone. . . .

Kean College is still not a closed chapter. Louis Farrakhan spoke there on March 28. More than 1,000 demonstrators stood in the rain in an impressive protest against Farrakhan. Senator Lautenberg spoke; Congressmen and New Jersey legislators also raised their voices. Some blacks joined the crowd as well. But the *New York Times* did not mention it. TV crews did not see the mass of protesters. . . .

It is hard to understand that an institution supported by taxpayers' money can support outright anti-Semitism. It is difficult to grasp that it is done under the cover of "free speech." And it is more than revolting that enemies of free speech can invoke a right they would not grant to others. . . . The use and misuse of the printed word, of radio and television, can create a new reality. And so can fear and the lack of courage to confront those who cannot be appeased. Recently, Howard University canceled the lecture of a Jewish scholar because school authorities were afraid that demonstrations against his appearance would "embarrass" him.

Arno Herzberg
Union, New Jersey

To the Editor of Commentary:

I found Arch Puddington's article informative and revealing. His insightful discussion of how the emphasis on cultural diversity in our various institutions has contributed to the problem of black anti-Semitism is a valuable addition to our understanding.

Never have Jews enjoyed such a high degree of esteem and achievement as in the present-day United States. Jews are preeminent in medicine, the arts, literature, academics, politics, finance, law, and, of course, philanthropy. . . . For many Jews there may be a feeling of guilt that they have accomplished so much while many black Americans with whom they fought civil-rights battles have far less and appear no longer to love them. But all that was over a generation ago; today, Jews and African-American anti-Semites have far different interests. It appears irrational and unrealistic that Jews and blacks should have the same voting patterns (80 percent of the Jews and 90 percent of the blacks voted Democratic in 1992).

I am concerned with . . . the reaction of many Jews, too many, who feel threatened and abused. Their answer is a "dialogue" over ideas which, as Mr. Puddington correctly points out, not so long ago would have been dismissed as unworthy of discussion. Less defensible is their continued support, both vocally and financially, for the institutions and individuals who have damned them. Jews have been generous in their contributions to black causes. Perhaps such contributions should be reexamined. . . .

Robert J. Rosenthal
Washington, D.C.

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To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Easily the greatest foes of America's blacks are those who control drug traffic within our borders. Tradition has it that the Mafia controls drugs. . . . Why then doesn't the black establishment or, more specifically, its recently-emerged vocal champions, speak out against the Mafia, knowing all too well the destruction that drugs have wrought on the black population?

The answer is obvious. Mafiosi, when confronted by accusers, detractors, and the like, do not react "with wounded innocence and appeals for 'dialogue' and 'healing,'" as Mr. Puddington puts it. Not on your life. . . .

Farrakhan and his ilk are too shrewd to throw their vicious diatribes at certain of their white Christian brothers. Why should they when they can concentrate instead on one of the world's most famous targets? And at no risk. . . .

Aaron Jacobson
Cleveland, Ohio

To the Editor of Commentary:

Hurray for Arch Puddington and his article, which is very revealing about the disturbing trends developing in the black community. Recently, in Oakland, California, Claremont High School students were thrown out of an auditorium for openly laughing during a screening of the Academy Award-winning *Schindler's List*. . . . During the entire movie, the quiet of the auditorium was punctuated by sporadic laughter only during the numerous execution scenes. When the Jews were slaughtered, black students saw it as a cause for celebration and giggled hysterically. . . .

Erik Gregory
San Francisco, California

Arch Puddington writes:

To those who have written generous words about my article on black anti-Semitism, as well as those who have contacted me personally in a similar vein, my profound thanks. I wish I were able to report that the conditions which I discussed had improved in the wake of the controversy over Khalid Muhammad's speech at Kean College. Unfortunately, the ensuing months have given no evidence of an improved environment on university campuses. Muhammad, Louis Farrakhan, Leonard Jeffries, and other veteran black anti-Semites have been, if anything, even more in demand on the campus lecture circuit. In the most notorious incident, Khalid Muhammad and several other black academics who have gained reputations for their attacks on Judaism were brought together on the same platform for what amounted to an anti-Jewish rally at Howard University. This occurred a few days after Muhammad and an entourage were given a special tour of the Holocaust museum, after which an apparently unmoved Muhammad held a press conference at which he belittled Jewish suffering at the hands of the Nazis.

The long-term consequences of the reemergence of black anti-Semitism are as yet unclear. While this past academic year's controversies may stimulate a reassessment of the diversity agenda on campus, such an outcome is not likely in the current political environment. The example set by the Clinton administration of openly apportioning government appointments along racial and gender lines is not likely to encourage university officials to adopt policies based on merit or even on economic need.

At the same time, the recent events are almost certain to damage irreparably whatever was left of the black-Jewish civil-rights alliance. While it is true that black-Jewish ties have survived similar controversies in the past, this was often due to a sense that, whatever the hate-mongers at the margins might be saying, the mainstream black leadership consisted of individuals who valued the Jewish contribution to the cause of racial progress and would not tolerate any reflection of bigotry within the civil-rights community. The civil-rights leadership of today is clearly not of the same caliber. Thus the director of the NAACP, the Reverend Benjamin Chavis, has repeatedly championed the acceptance of Louis Farrakhan into the ranks of black leadership, despite Farrakhan's many attacks on Jews, Judaism, and Jewish influence.

Furthermore, the utter cynicism of the anti-Jewish offensive initiated by Farrakhan and others is not likely to escape the attention of Jews who have counted themselves allies of the civil-rights cause. In an earlier period, black anti-Semitism was often ascribed to the difficult encounters between black inner-city residents and the Jewish merchants and landlords with whom they dealt on a regular basis. Today, there is little Jewish economic involvement in black neighborhoods; blacks deal with Korean merchants, Arab merchants, or black merchants, but seldom if ever with Jewish merchants. The absence of the kind of day-to-day encounters which often produce ethnic tensions has compelled Farrakhan and his ilk to invent ever more bizarre theories to explain the continuing "oppression" of blacks by Jews. Thus the fiction of Jewish domination of the slave trade and the railing against Jewish sports agents and doctors.

Most distressing of all is the degree to which the Farrakhan world view finds acceptance among black college students. To be sure, most black students are not drawn to the politics of militant nationalism. Those who do find the message of racism appealing, however, tend to be the more politically motivated. Whether they actually believe the myths and slanders spread by their political role models, they most certainly are learning a thoroughly unhealthy lesson about how politics is conducted in America today. While Louis Farrakhan is in part responsible for teaching the lesson that race equals power, he and his fellow demagogues are ultimately less blameworthy than the broader political and educational institutions of American society which are broadcasting a similar message, albeit in much more polite language. As long as race remains a powerful and semiofficially sanctioned currency of power, black anti-Semitism and similar phenomena will find fertile soil for growth.

Trial by Jury

To the Editor of Commentary:

Walter Berns's discussion of the defects of the criminal-jury system ["Getting Away With Murder," April] is right as far as it goes, but, alas, it does not go far enough. Mr. Berns spends almost all of his time discussing the Menendez brothers and Lorena Bobbitt, confining his discussion of innocents wrongly convicted to less than a paragraph. His focus is unfortunate for several reasons. First, even if Mr. Berns is right in saying that the jury got it wrong in the Menendez and Bobbitt cases, which I think he is, the nature of the error

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he scorns is as firmly rooted in our culture as is the jury system itself. That is, the system prefers that if the jury errs, it errs on the side of acquitting the guilty rather than convicting the innocent.

Second, at least with respect to the Menendez brothers, Mr. Berns's critique is not sufficiently heedful of the relationship between shrewd lawyering and jury success. This relationship is evident in civil trials as well as criminal prosecutions, but it strikes me as a great deal more serious in the criminal arena where so many defendants are indigent and therefore unable to afford hall-of-fame trial lawyers. (In the civil arena, contingent-fee arrangements make this problem somewhat more tractable.) Simply put, good lawyers are able to sabotage the truth-finding function of juries, by means ranging from the effective use of peremptory strikes to downright obfuscation. Sometimes the lawyers who win are those who have the facts on their side, but not always: Mike Tyson's facts were every bit as good as Erik Menendez's.

Finally, it is important not to shy away from the brutal impact of Mr. Berns's insight. He reminds us that juries are made up of talk-show addicted human beings, and human beings often have a hard time discarding their prejudices and predispositions when they enter the jury room. That inability, however, explains not only trivial cases (which, in the scheme of things, Lorena Bobbitt's is) but also the gravest of matters. For example, juries in Georgia in capital-murder cases sentence to death those whose victims are white at a rate nearly three times that of those whose victims are black. And a California jury, comprised, one assumes, of citizens who worry about crime in their neighborhood as the rest of us do, somehow determined that the officers who leisurely beat Rodney King to within a wisp of death did not use excessive force.

Mr. Berns is right in saying that the jury system is broken. It is broken because it represents society. We cannot fix one without fixing the other. What we ought to do in the meantime is amend the Constitution and take the jury guarantees out.

DAVID R. DOW

Law Center
University of Houston
Houston, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Walter Berns's incredulous outrage at the outcome of the Menendez murder case is entirely justified, but his strictures about the trial judge's jury instructions are somewhat unfair. Although Judge Weisberg properly rejected the defense's request for an instruction that this was a case where a claim of self-defense could support an acquittal (correctly concluding that the brothers could not show that they had a reasonable belief of imminent harm), he felt compelled by California precedent to instruct the jury on "imperfect" self-defense, i.e., that an honest but mistaken belief in imminent harm could support a verdict of manslaughter. This theory provided the opening wedge for all of the testimony about the defendants' relationship with their parents and their (to me, as to Mr. Berns) untruthful and concocted claims of abuse. But any fault for this travesty of justice lies with the California appellate courts, which have promulgated this doctrine, not with Judge Weisberg who felt too bound to apply it.

ERIC KENDALL

Los Angeles, California

WALTER BERNS WRITES:

I thank Eric Kendall for explaining why Judge Weisberg allowed—or, to be more precise, found it necessary to allow—the Menendez brothers to sit on the stand and tell all those malicious, and evidently false, tales of child abuse. What he says confirms my judgment that something is seriously wrong with our criminal-justice system, and not only in California. David R. Dow agrees, but he puts the blame on "shrewd lawyering" and, ultimately, on American society, and suggests that the time has come to abolish the requirement of trial by jury in criminal cases. The British did this in Northern Ireland (the very model of a modern multicultural society, to paraphrase W. S. Gilbert), and it will be a sorry day if, for similar reasons, we find it necessary to follow their example.

U. S. Sovereignty

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the ideological warfare of our time, there has emerged the interesting phenomenon of the "phony Center," whereby liberals try to seize exclusive possession of

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the "responsible" middle ground located between the "extremes" of both Left and Right; thus—to mention just one well-known instance—Robert Hughes of *Time* adopted conservative arguments against multiculturalism while energetically vilifying the very conservatives from whom he derived those arguments. The motive for this tactic is obvious: to criticize the Left while avoiding any damning link with the Right. The phony centrist can thus sit back, let the Right fight the battle and take the casualties, then move in and claim credit for the Right's ideas and accomplishments while consigning the Right to the fever swamps. It is, to put it mildly, an intellectually dishonest thing to do.

But now COMMENTARY, which itself has eloquently dissected the "phony Center" (see Carol Iannone's "PC with a Human Face," April 1993), seems to be making out a phony Center of its own. In "Threats to U.S. Sovereignty" [March], Jeremy Rabkin says that Patrick J. Buchanan, who has attacked the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as a threat to national sovereignty, is a "demagogue" engaging in "overheated" and "hypocritical" rhetoric. But having dismissed Buchanan, Mr. Rabkin then turns around and criticizes NAFTA for the same reasons as Buchanan! It seems that when Buchanan is worried about the loss of U.S. sovereignty, that is very bad, but when a writer for COMMENTARY expresses the exact same concerns (several months *after* the historic anti-NAFTA battle has already been lost), well, that is very good. The "no-friends-to-the-Right" syndrome, and the resulting construction of a phony Center from which to attack both Left *and* Right (in this instance the Left being the globalists and the Right being the nationalists), apparently afflicts neoconservatives as much as it does liberals. . . .

LAWRENCE AUSTER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jeremy Rabkin makes timely warning against poorly conceived "feel-good" treaties that might slip through an inattentive Congress.

We need a procedure to reject treaties and bury them, so they cannot be brought up again without adequate debate. To illustrate: suppose a majority in Congress is alarmed by a new "Geneva Convention" that gives guerrilla/terrorists the same protections as lawful uniformed combatants, but without corresponding enforceable responsibilities. If Congress voted by a simple or two-thirds majority to reject such a treaty, then it could not be revived without (a) a similar majority vote to recall it, (b) a six-month waiting period, to ensure adequate public debate, and (c) only then, within a one-month window, a vote to ratify. Congress should have the power to reject a treaty even before it is submitted by the President.

HUGO S. CUNNINGHAM
Boston, Massachusetts

JEREMY RABKIN WRITES:

Lawrence Auster complains that I have "dismissed" Patrick J. Buchanan—along with NAFTA critics on the Left—in order to position myself in the Center, while actually criticizing NAFTA "for the same reasons as Buchanan." My piece actually linked Buchanan's name with that of Ross Perot. But I notice that Mr. Auster does not try to defend Perot's bluster about the "giant sucking sound" of American jobs leaving for Mexico. Perhaps I was unfair to link Buchanan with Perot, since (unlike Perot) Buchanan is a man of genuine talent and many sound and serious concerns. I am quite ready to acknowledge here that many of my fears about threats to American sovereignty overlap with those that have been ably articulated by Buchanan, both in the NAFTA debate and in other contexts.

Nonetheless, Buchanan was not content to criticize the institutional design of the NAFTA agreement or of the Clinton side-accords to NAFTA. Like Perot, Buchanan aligned himself quite directly with the protectionist attack on NAFTA. At this point, Buchanan makes no bones about his opposition to free trade. In one column not long ago, he went so far as to defend the Smoot-Hawley tariff of 1930, which most economists see as a principal contributor to the Great Depression. I think "demagogic" is not too strong a word for some of Buchanan's attacks on free trade, because it seems very clear to me that the U.S.—and the rest of the world—will be much worse off if we repudiate the free-trade policies of the last 50 years. At any rate, I am sure that because of Buchanan's open and general embrace of economic protectionism in the NAFTA debate, his (valid) complaints about particular details of the trade agreement did not get the hearing they deserve. And that was the point I tried to make, by setting off Buchanan's general scare talk with that of the Left, in the opening paragraphs of my article.

I do not wish to dispute with Mr. Auster, however, over the choicest locations on the ideological spectrum. Many champions of free trade consider themselves to be on the Right. I am certainly held by my academic colleagues to be there. If Mr. Auster wants to place me there, that will not trouble me, either. But I still want to make the case for safeguarding American sovereignty without abandoning free trade.

Hugo S. Cunningham's letter addresses a genuine issue, though I am not sure it proposes a feasible remedy. It is not uncommon for Presidents to indicate support for an international treaty or convention without pressing the issue to an up-or-down vote in the Senate. In such cases, the treaty or convention may drift for years in legal limbo, allowing proponents to claim that a particular agreement is "morally binding," or at least a relevant benchmark for American policy—as the SALT II agreement was given a strange artificial life without ever being submitted to a vote (because it likely would have been a negative vote) in the Senate. The Carter administration expressed support for a number of human-rights conventions in this way, without submitting them to the Senate.

But I am not sure we would always benefit by depriving Presidents of the flexibility to submit treaties to the Senate according to their own (rather than the Senate's) preferred timetable. On the other hand, Congress has always been free to adopt nonbinding resolutions emphasizing its opposition to proposed measures, including international ones. It is unclear to me what would be gained by Mr. Cunningham's proposal that is not already available with a "sense of the Senate" resolution. As I understand it, Mr. Cunningham's proposal would not prevent a later Congress from reconsidering an agreement that has been formally rejected, but would merely make this more difficult. Since two-thirds of the Senate must ultimately vote to confirm a treaty,

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I do not see that much is gained by initially requiring a smaller proportion of the Senate to indicate its willingness to reconsider the treaty. But I agree that more thought should be given to procedures for forcing, at some point, a clarification of the status of international agreements that have been endorsed by the President but not ratified by the Senate.

About Judaism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I appreciate Jon D. Levenson's many positive and perceptive comments about my book, *The God I Believe In* (conversations about Judaism with fourteen eminent Jews) [Books in Review, May] and wish to correct not matters of opinion but several misleading statements, such as the comment that the book exhibits a "tendency to read like a questionnaire rather than a set of sustained theological inquiries accessible to laymen." The fact is that to keep the conversations focused on the issues of faith dealt with in the book, it was of course necessary to raise many questions which prompted the interviewees to clarify their beliefs, but the text has no resemblance whatever to a questionnaire. It is precisely what the subtitle says, a book of conversations or dialogues about Judaism.

Mr. Levenson, moreover, regrets that "implications are seldom drawn out. Haberman is continually hurrying to the next question on his check list." The reference to a check list is a fantasy of the reviewer. All conversations were completely spontaneous. The interviewees and I faced each other without any notes whatever, ready to let the conversation flow wherever it might. As the reader may readily see, each interview is marked by a different emphasis according to the person's deepest convictions or attempt to cope with doubts. The "sustained theological inquiries" for which Mr. Levenson is looking may be found in every interview, though not to the point of an "anthology of essays," which Mr. Levenson would prefer to the conversational format.

I share his regret that I could not "follow up" with further questions on deeply personal accounts of religious experiences, but the same regret could be voiced about all the other themes in the book. Each of the fourteen interviews might well have been lengthened many times, creating not one but fourteen books. Mr. Levenson, however, entirely misses the object of my book in his suggestion that I should have challenged the position of certain interviewees, e.g., Cynthia Ozick's rejection of all notions of immortality, which, he argues, "would not only have added drama to the dialogue; it would also have imparted a sense that the great issues of Jewish belief were being engaged and not merely reported on." Challenging the interviewees to theological debates might not only have "added drama" but also abruptly ended some of the dialogues. The object of my book was to *report* what a representative group of eminent contemporary Jews believe, not what they *should* believe. I was not looking for "textbook theology." If Mr. Levenson contributes another book of that genre, I will read it with interest.

Meanwhile, my advice to him is to quit fighting windmills. It is pointless to rail at the "extreme individualism of contemporary American Jewish culture." Personal autonomy, the free determination of one's beliefs and values, is here to stay. Free choice in religious matters is not necessarily bad for religion. On the contrary, it challenges the believer to make the best possible case for his faith by precept or example.

[RABBI] JOSHUA O. HABERMAN
Washington Hebrew Congregation
Washington, D.C.

JON D. LEVENSON WRITES:

Joshua O. Haberman's list of questions can be found on p. 5 of his book. Neither the list nor the judgment that he adhered to it fairly well during the actual interviews is a fantasy of mine.

I never said that he should have "[c]halleng[ed] the interviewees to theological debates" or reported "what they *should* believe." What I did suggest is that he too often missed "a chance to put forward opposing considerations, thus forcing the respondent into deeper reflection." Some of his interviewees might perhaps have been too insecure for this, but I doubt that many would have "abruptly ended . . . the dialogues," especially if Rabbi Haberman had succeeded in posing his follow-ups in a less confrontational manner than his term "debates" connotes. Given the wide and laudable diversity of his interviewees, there is no chance whatsoever that the probing I missed in his book would have yielded anything so dry and so uniform as "textbook theology."

I am also unable to find the "rail[ing]" that Rabbi Haberman detects in my mention of "the extreme individualism of contemporary American Jewish culture" in the concluding sentence of my review. Lacking the gift of prophecy, I cannot determine whether he is right that this condition is "here to stay." I do know that recent experience has not been kind to notions of historical irreversibility and that the ideal of the unencumbered, autonomous self has been under attack of late from several directions.

In his use of the words "here to stay," Rabbi Haberman seems to me to imply that the individualism in question is not one of the "age-old doctrines" of Judaism that he thinks—erroneously, in my view—his interviews found to be more or less alive and well. And in writing that the new situation "challenges the believer to make the best possible case for his faith," he seems to be joining me (and others) in the belief that Judaism must be based, as I put it in the review, on something more corporate and more public than the individual's "preestablished personal values and private preferences." If so, then here, too, we are in agreement.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Having recently completed G. Edward White's biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: Law and the Inner-self*, I was drawn to Daniel J. Silver's review in the March issue. I finished the review, however, wondering whether Mr. Silver and I had read the same book.

The review speaks of White's "carping style," driven by an intent "to debunk retrospective idealizations of Holmes as a liberal." This is followed by a rhetorical assault intended to show the anti-Holmes bias of the biography. But every particular in Mr. Silver's attack is refuted by White's own words. Thus, the review complains that Holmes's "intellectual daring" is twisted by White into an "arrogant solipsism, signaling contempt

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for a collegial profession," whereas White writes that Holmes "was universally polite and good-tempered to his contemporaries, suppressing anger in confrontations." Mr. Silver asserts that Holmes's wit is "turned into a perverse self-indulgence," whereas White writes admiringly of Holmes's sense of humor and notes that he did "not indulge his wit or humor at the expense of others." Holmes's "sense of duty," asserts Mr. Silver, is distorted into a "masquerade of self-deception," whereas White, in a concluding assessment, writes that "duty [to Holmes] meant pursuing one's profession with attention to 'noble' ends, such as creating lasting scholarship or contributing to the fabric of the law's growth." And, finally, how can the suggestion that White was "hostile to Holmes's character" be reconciled with the references in the biography to "the enthusiasm, the love, with which [Holmes] approached life," or to "the rich collection of correspondence, expressing so wide a variety of views on so many absorbing and important issues," or to White's assertion that "Holmes's scholarship will never end, because his life and thought are nearly infinite in their variety"?

White has, in my view, written an extremely important and successful biography—one differing from others on the subject in that he has made a probing study of Holmes's work, both as a scholar and as a judge, and has explored the connection between that work and the events in Holmes's life. In the process, he has dwelled on inconsistencies in Holmes's writings and decisions and on problematic qualities as, for example, a driving ambition that led him abruptly to quit the Harvard Law School faculty, without a decent interval, in order to assure a judicial appointment. But surely the mature mind can reconcile this image of a complex man, bounded by human dimensions, with Mr. Silver's description of Holmes as our "leading jurist" and as a "Victorian gentleman, the likes of whom we may never see again"—a description that, I suspect, White would readily approve.

FREDERIC A. NICHOLSON
Norfolk, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel J. Silver's excellent review of the latest book on Oliver Wendell Holmes captures nicely the muscled, macho quality of Holmes's thought. I was always taken by the aloof style best exemplified in Holmes's famous quip about the Slaughterhouse Cases (whether Louisiana could constitutionally build slaughterhouses):

> I'm so skeptical as to the knowledge of good and bad that I have no practical criterion except what the crowd wants. Long ago I decided I was not God. When a state came in here and wanted to build a slaughterhouse, I looked at the Constitution and if I could not find anything in there that a state could not build a slaughterhouse, I said to myself, if they want a slaughterhouse, God dammit, let them build it.

A brief conversation I had with the late Mark DeWolfe Howe, Holmes's last law clerk and official biographer, illustrates his Olympian stance and ironic detachment, which did indeed accompany a deep-seated pessimism about the possibility of humans changing their lot through grand social schemes.

I remarked to Howe that Holmes often reminded me of Hemingway's assertion that "What is moral is what I feel good after."

Howe concurred, pointing out that Holmes and Hemingway were very similar types, tested in battle, champions of manly virtues, and coolly detached from the affairs of their fellows. Certainly each man set the pace for literature and law in the 20th century.

HAROLD TICKTIN
Cleveland, Ohio

DANIEL J. SILVER WRITES:

I would like to reassure Frederic A. Nicholson that it is most likely we were reading the same book. The problem is, as we say in the law, that I attribute different weight to the evidence. White does say that Holmes was unfailingly polite in person to his judicial colleagues (less so in correspondence about them). But White implies that Holmes's rather chilly politeness was a mask for the contempt in which Holmes often held his colleagues' ideas. White describes how it is odd that in a collegial profession, where judges are expected to exchange ideas, Holmes acted as if he did not need or desire his brethren's advice. And, yes, White concedes that Holmes possessed wit; however, White goes on to say that Holmes was willfully ob-

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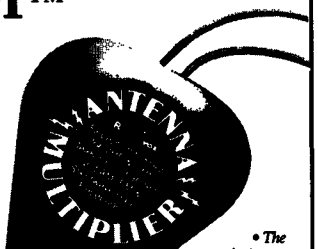

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scure in his sometimes cryptic aphorisms, as if he did not care whether or not he were clearly understood by those without his intellectual command.

While noting Holmes's enthusiasm for life, White goes on to imply that this enthusiasm was a bit unfathomable or even perverse because Holmes failed to share much of his life with other people. White explains the melancholy that overtook Holmes in retirement in characteristic fashion: "At the end of his life the self-preoccupation that had vitalized him for so long became evidence that after more than ninety years he was essentially alone." For White, Holmes begins and ends in "self-preoccupation," a quality White does not admire—though it is a harsh judgment that is not earned by the facts White adduces. In sum, the valuable aspects of White's scholarship should not blind us to a consistent, insinuating strain of bias.

I am grateful to Harold Ticktin both for his kind comments and for his lonely words in homage to what used to be called without embarrassment "manly virtues," virtues much knocked about of late. G. Edward White's distaste for the anti-communitarian effects of "ironic detachment" notwithstanding, it is clear that the morally positive obverse of such detachment is intellectual independence—a quality richly found in Holmes. Along with the courage of his convictions—which he put to the test in both the field of battle and the war of ideas—Holmes's independent temper made of him a genuine hero.

Free Will

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jeffrey Marsh's critique of Francis Crick's *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* [Books in Review, April], illustrates once again the seeming incapacity of certain gifted scientists like Crick and other members of the "touch-and-count" school to apprehend those intuitive aspects of behavior which cannot be quantified and which will not register on an MRI, on a CAT scan, or be calculated in grams or drams.

Harry Stack Sullivan in *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychoanalysis* expressed this difficulty with humorous frustration while trying to convey to interns the concept of empathy:

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I have had a good deal of trouble at times with people of a certain type of educational history; since they cannot refer empathy to vision, hearing, or some other special sense receptor, and since they do not know whether it is transmitted by the ether waves or what not, they find it hard to accept the idea of empathy. . . . So although empathy may sound mysterious, remember that there is much that sounds mysterious in the universe, only you have got used to it; and perhaps you will get used to empathy.

Mr. Marsh's review also points to a significant contradiction in Crick's theory that free will is something "we think we have" because we do not yet have a complete understanding of the visual system, and that those of us who find "something inexplicable about man and his soul . . . are captives of a view 'predetermined by a slavish adherence to religious dogma.'" . . .

I wonder whether Crick himself is not captive to a mechanistic teleology which precludes even the possibility of considering free will. For if, in essence, our thoughts, philosophies, and consequent actions are all controlled by genes, then there surely must be a gene which dictates that very thought itself. Thus, we say we have no free will because there is a gene which compels us to believe we have no free will. To pursue this kind of reasoning convinces me that Abraham Joshua Heschel was more correct than he realized when he said, "Man does not live by explanations alone."

Francis Crick's difficulty is characteristic of . . . behavioral psychology in that behavioral psychologists still, in the words of R.D. Laing, continue "to find the issues of consciousness and unconsciousness as two reified systems, both split from the totality of the person." Laing sums it up concisely: "In a science of persons, . . . behavior is a function of experience; and both experience and behavior are always in relation to someone or something other than self." That is something that the Cricks and Skinners, despite their brilliance, are not able to grasp.

GERSON SILVERSTEIN
Brooklyn, New York

JEFFREY MARSH WRITES:

Gerson Silverstein oversimplifies Francis Crick's picture of the human mind and his concep-

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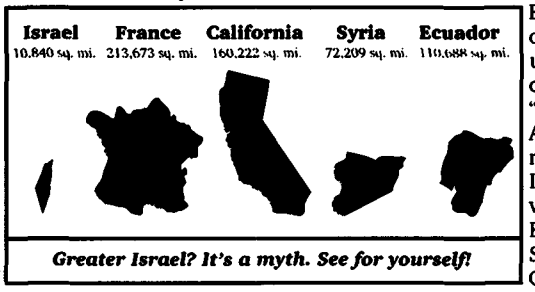
In May of 1989, James Baker, declared in an address to AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) that the Jewish state should once and for all forget about "the dream of a greater Israel". It was the first time that this phrase had been heard from the lips of a Western statesman. What does it mean? Does it have any relation to reality?

What are the facts?

Stripes on the flag. Arab propaganda has it that the two stripes on the flag of Israel, above and below the star of David, represent the Nile and the Euphrates River, respectively, and signify Israel's expansionist desire to form an empire that would supposedly reach from Cairo to Baghdad. But that has no basis in fact, of course. Nowhere in any documents of the Jewish state, in any statement by even the most "radical" spokesman can any reference to anything like that be found.

Israel's Borders. "Palestine", part of the Ottoman Empire before World War I, came under British mandate after that war. The Golan Heights were part of Palestine. Israel's current borders are the result of the 1948 War of Independence, in which six Arab armies invaded the new-born state, but were utterly defeated, and the 1967 Six-Day War, in which those same armies once again invaded Israel. In that war, Israel conquered the Gaza Strip, the vast Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. And Israel also *repossessed* the provinces of Judea/Samaria, (the "West Bank"), and the eastern part of Jerusalem, which had been occupied by the Jordanians nineteen years earlier when they invaded the just new-born Jewish state. In order to achieve peace with Egypt, Israel returned to it all of the Sinai. Israel is and has always been prepared to grant full autonomy to the Arabs living in Judea/Samaria. It is clear to all knowledgeable in military matters that, for immutable strategic reasons, Israel cannot for any foreseeable future abandon or yield military control of Judea/Samaria and of the Golan Heights.



Greater Israel? It's a myth. See for yourself!

The Myth of Greater Israel. Israel is one of the smallest countries in the world. Most people don't realize how small it really is. One wonders whether former Secretary of State Baker was aware of it when he uttered his memorable phrase of "Greater Israel". A look at the map is revealing. Including the vaunted "West Bank", the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, the entire area of the country is barely over 10,000 square miles. France is twenty times as large as Israel, California fifteen times as large, Syria about seven times as large, and "tiny" Ecuador ten times as large. Israel is so small that its area is less than half the size of San Bernadino County, California; if it were dropped into Lake Michigan it would disappear from sight without a trace. The Arab countries in contrast are huge—they occupy twice the area of the United States.

It is clear that the concept of "Greater Israel", lacks any validity and has no basis in fact. To apply such a concept to a country as small as Israel would almost seem a mockery. Obviously, Israel has no territorial ambitions. All it wants is to live in peace within secure and defensible borders, just as any other country and as required under U.N. Resolution No. 242. But it seems that the *size* of Israel, whether "greater" or "lesser" is not at all the concern of Israel's implacable Arab enemies. The very *existence* of Israel, of a Jewish state in their midst of whatever size, is unacceptable to the Arabs. And unless that mindset changes, not until the Arab states have become democracies and have come to full acceptance of Israel, are willing to make *true* peace with it, and are prepared to establish normal and friendly relations with Israel can any possible territorial adjustment be considered. As it looks right now, that may still take some time.

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tion of free will. Crick would agree that behavior is in part a product of experience (otherwise people could not learn) and he does not believe that people's specific thoughts and decisions are predetermined by genes or anything else. Crick does essentially regard free will as an illusion because he denies that human consciousness has any reality beyond the workings of the brain. But he would say that what a particular person will decide under particular circumstances is inherently unpredictable because there is a random element in the decision-making process, which evolution has selected as the best response mechanism to a complex and unpredictable world.

I assume Crick would not deny that empathy exists, but he would simply regard it as another aspect of mental activity that persists because those who possess it derive some advantage in the struggle to survive and reproduce successfully. That is the standard evolutionist explanation, which, as Mr. Silverstein implies, cannot be falsified without going outside that particular mode of thought.

Virtue

To the Editor of Commentary:

James Q. Wilson's perceptive essay, "Tales of Virtue" [April], is marred by a minor error and a major historical untruth. The error: Horatius guarded the bridge, not Horatio (who appeared in Hamlet and later as Hornblower, but not in ancient Rome). The untruth: Father Maximilian Kolbe did not sacrifice himself for a Jew but for a co-religionist with a family. This is important because before his incarceration, Kolbe had been a rabid anti-Semite, the author and editor of numerous written attacks on Jews. What he did finally may count as heroism, but he does not deserve to be placed among the righteous Gentiles.

George E. Ehrlich
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

To the Editor of Commentary:

James Q. Wilson is disposed to reconcile "strict behaviorism" with his views of developmental psychology, together with his philosophically confused ideas regarding the epistemology of our beliefs about ethics and morality.

No reasonable person who has worked with children at a clinical level (Mr. Wilson has not) is a "strict behaviorist," and no one who is a "frequent contributor" to Commentary, who writes in an ostensibly learned vein, should exhibit such an abysmal misunderstanding of Kant.

Nowhere does Kant say or imply that you can only be said to have acted morally if you can honestly declare that you didn't enjoy a minute of it, as Mr. Wilson maintains. What Kant said is that

> in order that an action should be morally good it is not enough that it conform to the moral law, but it must be done for the sake of the law, otherwise that conformity is only very contingent and uncertain; since a principle which is not moral, although it may now and then produce actions conformable to the law, will also produce actions which contradict it.

Mr. Wilson says that "self-command is about growing up and becoming mature." It is a sad commentary on Commentary that this passes for serious discourse.

Hal J. Breen
Phoenix, Arizona

To the Editor of Commentary:

It should come as no surprise that in the current alarm over the collapse of moral values a comforting literature should suddenly arise to offer us hope. In James Q. Wilson's recent work, *The Moral Sense*, and now in his article, "Tales of Virtue," he offers us hope in his reassuring appraisal of William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, a foray into fables and legends dealing with great moral teachings.

These seductive appeals to give meaning to conscience in our daily lives are, of course, commendable. The task of civilizing us, however, seems gravely complicated by noting the alarming collapse of all human decency in such a sophisticated culture as Germany under Hitler. Thousands upon thousands of ordinary Germans—shopkeepers, schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, even academics—joined a passionate crusade to slaughter millions of innocents for failing to measure up to a barbarous test of ethnic purity. All this within recent memory; all this in a society that gave us Goethe and Beethoven. . . .

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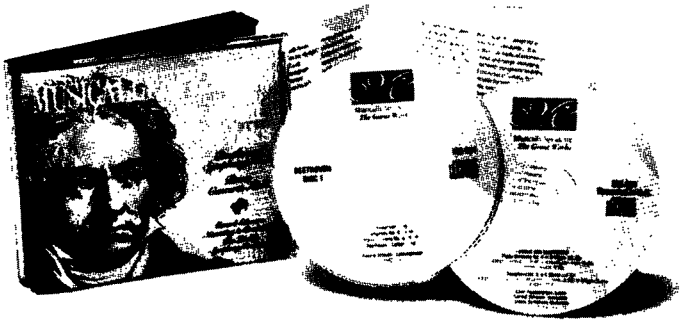

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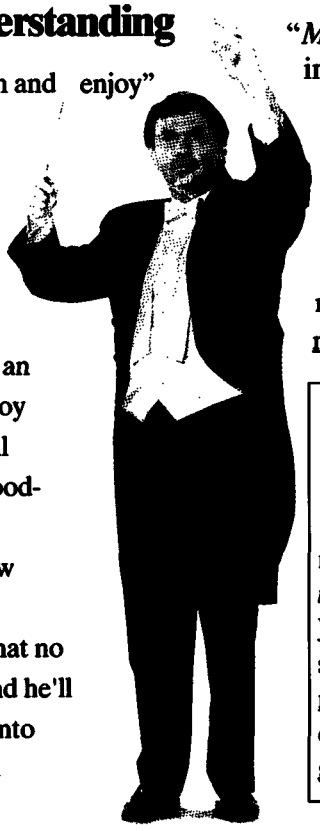

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And now, at our own doorstep, how do we countenance the face of ugliness in the rabid anti-Semitism among young American blacks who applaud Louis Farrakhan? . . .

CHARLES ANSELL
Sherman Oaks, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

James Q. Wilson has, with insight, shown many dimensions of William J. Bennett's achievement in *The Book of Virtues*. Mr. Wilson has grasped the essential quality of a narrative of virtue, as opposed to a didactic recitation or dogmatic proposition. Bennett knows that the moral tale must be just that; a story of human dimensions, so as to activate our emotional and experiential resonance with the lesson learned.

Mr. Wilson also finds the important difference between virtues such as self-discipline, universally evident when realized, and the book's absent virtue, justice, which requires demonstration and argument to be understood as such. . . .

Nevertheless, there is an accomplishment in Bennett which even Mr. Wilson has missed. I am referring to the act of reading the book itself. Mr. Wilson asks how it could be that moral stories become effective in our lives. The stories serve best when, in a nightly gathering, an adult reads them aloud to youth. This is not an incidental feature of their worth.

A gathering of family for a purpose is a ritual, which itself has moral power. Children delight in the familiar tale repeated, because the form of enactment and the willing submission of the parent are themselves values in which the child might participate.

This dimension could be called the book's "meta-message"; in the familial reading is an experience of communion in learning and discovery, in reassurance and restoration.

Lastly, one should contrast this form of moral socialization . . . with the prevalent form in most children's lives. Television is a medium of dominance, not interaction. The child is assaulted and wheedled by sensation, and not for his own best interests. Passively observing, the child becomes a receptacle, not a participant. . . .

A reading, by contrast, is alive with interchange: facial expression, social interest, concern, delight, all of these pass between parent and child during the mutual engagement with a text. . . .

Moreover, the information load is vast, for the parent's tone of voice and performance stance enable a "commentary" on the action to accompany the content of the tale itself. Thus, even a depiction of cruelty or a tale of fallen character can serve a moral purpose, because from its reading we engage in a practically talmudic responsiveness to its meaning. . . .

Bennett has written a fine book. It stands ready . . . to work for us as a wise servant.

DAVID W. MURRAY
Fairfax, Virginia

Jewish Activists

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I must extend Robert M. Seltzer's description of Marshall Sklare's typology of Jewish intellectuals ["American Jews & Their Judaism, March] to include at least one more category.

Sklare had three categories—"assimilationists" like Louis Wirth; "critical intellectuals," like Judith Kramer, Seymour Leventman, Mark Zborowski, and Elizabeth Herzog; and a third wave, "survivalists," like Sklare himself. But simply to survive is too passive. . . .

In my book, *The Sociology of American Jews: A Critical Anthology*, . . . I add one more category—the "activist" Jewish intellectual of the post-1967 era. This perspective combines Jewish scholarship, Jewish survival, and radical activism; what one would call "progressive" in an earlier era.

There is actually a fifth category, but it has become quite marginalized, and that is Marxist-oriented Jewish social scientists and historians, people like Morris U. Schappes and, earlier, Ber Borochov and Moses Hess. It is very difficult to be a Marxist and a Jew and a sociologist. It may well be impossible. But it is not impossible to be an activist Left-liberal Jewish sociologist. And this is the fourth category that I represent and that goes beyond Marshall Sklare's survivalist perspective, though I do not mean to gainsay Sklare's singular impact on the field. . . .

Activist sociologists are distinguished by their heightened interest in pluralism, in Jewish subcommunities, and in Jewish "communities of deviance"—the Jewish poor, drug addicts, women, the ultra-Orthodox, Holocaust survivors, Jewish radicals, the homeless. Second, they are more attuned to the nascent Jewish feminist movement and its impact on Judaism and Jewish communal structures. . . . Third, they have a deep interest in religious behavior, synagogue life, educational alternatives, *havurot*, Jewish fellowship, and new political alliances with blacks, Christians, or Arabs.

While books by the late Irving Howe (*World of Our Fathers*, 1976) and the late Arthur Leibman (*Jews and the Left*, 1979) explored the turbulent and sometimes radical immigrant past, new interpretations and studies are necessary among a new generation of Jewish sociologists. Sadly, we are an aging generation and there are few young sociologists going into the field. . . . Not surprisingly, it is the students of Marshall Sklare . . . who are more in the activist mold than in the survivalist. It is with them that a new sociology of Jewry will emerge.

JACK NUSAN PORTER
Newton Highlands, Massachusetts

Reb Moishe Bear

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Arnold Beichman's anecdote about Reb Moishe Bear [Letters from Readers, April, commenting on Jacob Sloan's December 1993 article, "Saying Kaddish"] is a beautiful story, beautifully told. Thank you for publishing it.

ELLIOTT ZUCKERMAN
Annapolis, Maryland

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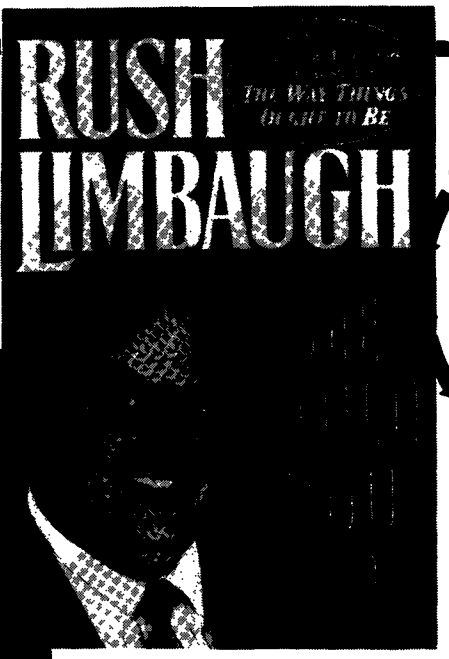

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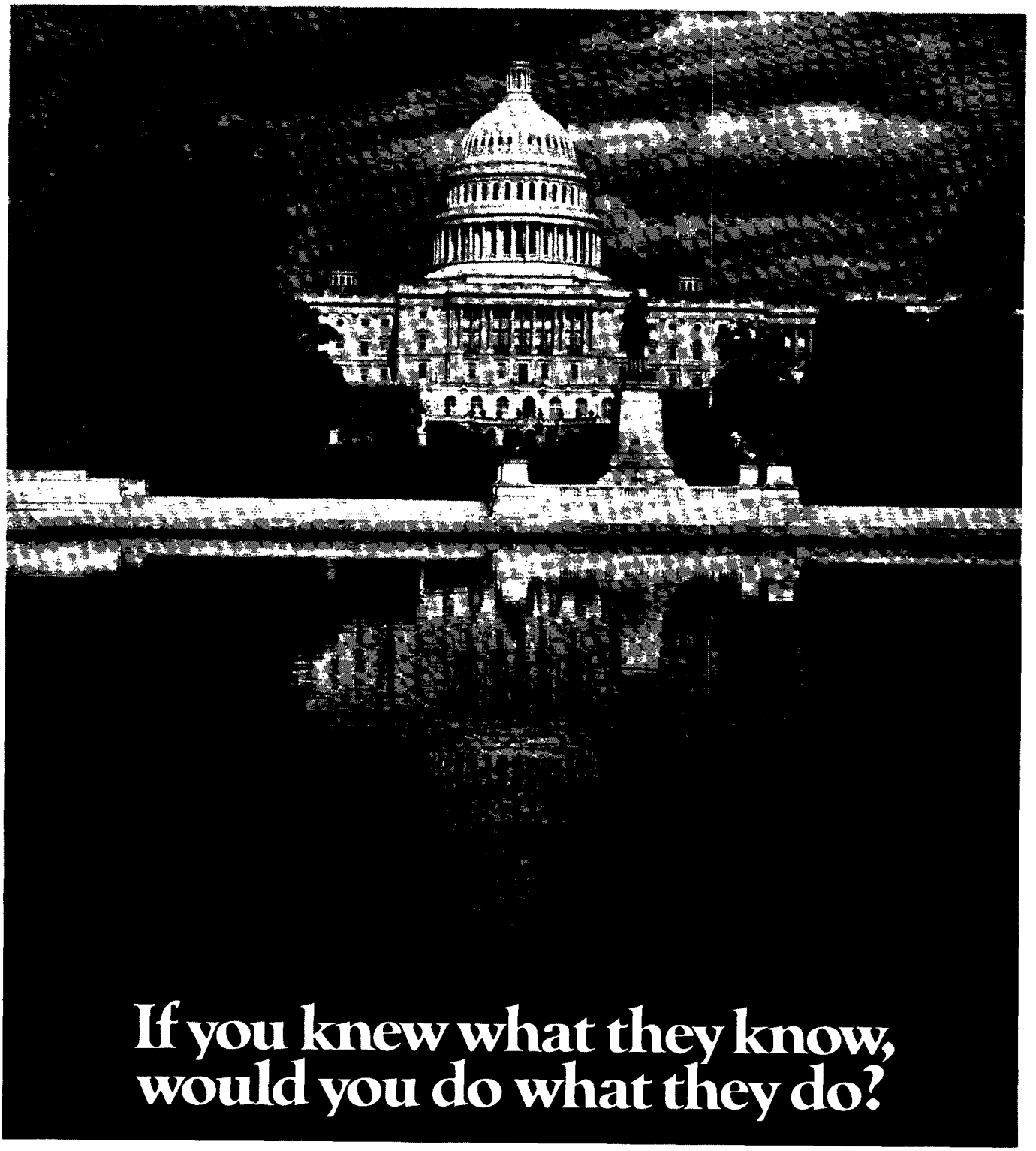

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A World Without Leaders

Paul Johnson

THE late Lord Beaverbrook, owner of the London *Daily Express* and other successful newspapers, had a habit of calling the office late in the evening and, if not immediately able to track down the editor-in-chief, bellowing: "Who's in charge of the clattering train?" Beaverbrook had a fearful image of his entire organization charging at full speed through the night, lights ablaze in every car, but with no engineer at the controls. This image often recurs to me as I contemplate the present state of the West, indeed, the whole of the civilized world. The lights are all on, there is riotous eating and drinking in the dining car, there are frantic games of poker, the darkened countryside hurtles past as we head for the millennium, but in the engineer's cab there is a collection of second-rate men holding futile arguments.

I do not recall any point in my lifetime when leadership has been so lacking right across the international democratic spectrum. Even during the "phony war" of 1939-40, when Chamberlain and Daladier, two bewildered and exhausted men, were languidly trying to organize a reluctant Britain and France to face the overwhelming reality of totalitarian power, at least there was the formidable presence of Franklin D. Roosevelt in the White House and, at Admiralty House in London, the incomparable Winston Churchill restlessly awaiting his cue to march center stage and start issuing commands.

Now there is no one of substance on the stage nor, so far as one can see, any understudy of caliber waiting in the wings. In Washington, the most important job of all is occupied by a man who has yet to prove that he can respond to great events even when free of domestic worries, but who is haunted by his disorderly past and increasingly entangled in the dishonest measures taken by himself and his staff to keep it buried. I have some sympathy with respectable Democratic pundits who argue, not wholly disinterestedly, that for the sake of the nation—and the world—Republicans in Congress and the media should call off the hunt for the scalp of Bill Clinton, and even that of his wife, and allow the President to get on with his job of leading the West.

Of course the same pundits had no such inhibition about hunting down Richard Nixon in 1974, when the international situation was in many ways far more serious. But that does not mean they are wrong to call for a truce this time.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the Clintons—I use the plural deliberately—would respond to a domestic cease-fire in the spirit in which it would be offered. Quite the contrary. Those who run the White House would take advantage of any end of hostilities about Clinton's past to consolidate their position and dig in for a long rule. They talk brazenly of a second term and, beyond that, of a Hillary presidency. That is only one of many reasons why the pack will never be called off the Clintons.

IT IS no new thing for the British to be forced to fill a leadership vacuum in Washington caused by the demands of American domestic politics. In a sense England has had to do this every four years, during the months when the U.S. electoral cycle is at its most intense. Number Ten Downing Street likewise provided more protracted bolstering during the presidential vicissitudes of the mid-1970's, when the British were sorely beset themselves.

But the trouble today is that Number Ten Downing Street is also in weary, incapable, and almost desperate hands. I have argued in British newspapers that John Major is the least robust Prime Minister since Viscount Goderich in the 1820's, a man described by the young Disraeli as "a transient and embarrassed phantom," who spent a lot of his spell in office weeping on the irritated bosom of his master, King George IV.

Some people would dispute this harsh comparison, but virtually all agree that Major is not up to his job. No sensible initiative can be expected from him even in the narrow area of Anglo-European relations, and it is quite beyond his strength or imagination to make a useful contribution to the West's handling of the post-cold-war world.

In Continental Europe, the roll call of leaders is no better. In Germany, Chancellor Helmut Kohl is now nearing the end of his road, hope-

PAUL JOHNSON, whose *Wake Up Britain!* has just been published in England, is working on a history of the United States. Among his many other books are *Modern Times* and *The Birth of the Modern.*

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lessly floundering in the quagmire he created for himself by opting for the instant integration of East Germany. He is unlikely to survive the October election and meanwhile has neither time nor energy to contribute to the West's counsels. In France, François Mitterrand is also at the end of his journey, beset by terminal scandals of his own making. Felipe González of Spain too is in terminal scandal trouble, and the new joker in the European pack, the populist Silvio Berlusconi of Italy, is still setting up his regime.

It may be that, in time, Europe's emergent populists, with their hostility to the old, failed coalitions of socialists and Christian Democrats, and their ability to articulate the frustrations and conservative impulses of Europe's forgotten masses, will provide new and vigorous leadership. But their time, though coming, is not yet, and in the interval Europe has nothing to give.

Finally, Japan, though possessing the world's second largest economy, not only has no leadership to offer but retains a political culture which brutally reproves public men who show signs of displaying any leadership at all. Japan works through the collective consensus of its elites, which evolves mysteriously and often tardily. In prewar times, those who tried to offer individual leadership in the Western tradition were assassinated, and as a result Japan blundered into a war which most of those at the top were well aware it could not win. The advent of democracy and the rule of law have enormously improved the quality of Japan's public life except in this respect, where nothing has changed. Japanese women, in my observation, do not feel these inhibitions about leading from the front, and over the next quarter-century, as they penetrate the upper reaches of public life, their contribution may change things. But their time, too, is not yet.

In short, if we survey the great and medium-sized powers today, it is hard to point to any society which is producing leadership. Ironically, the one exception is President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, a man who came to the top the hard way, by displaying determination and courage, and a knack for seizing the moment—leadership qualities *par excellence*. But he, too, is beset by all kinds of troubles, many of his own making, and his recently published memoirs reveal that his power to control events even in his own country is far more limited than most of us had supposed. He is more likely to be appealing to the West for help than aiding it with its leadership problem.

THERE are two more important general points to be made in any discussion of leadership. First, however generously displays of leadership may be acknowledged by posterity—particularly distant posterity—they usually evoke huge hostility at the time.

Thus, all the most successful leaders of recent decades have been vilified. General de Gaulle, who rescued France from anarchy in 1958, gave it stability, and laid the foundations of its present prosperity, was the object of intense hostility throughout his rule and was ignominiously turned out by popular vote in 1969. Margaret Thatcher, who performed similar services for Britain, was savagely axed by her colleagues in 1990, to general popular approval. Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore, perhaps the most resourceful of all postwar leaders, who transformed a small colony with no natural resources and an annual per-capita income of under $100 into one of the richest states in the world, has been bitterly denounced as an autocrat by all the world's "right-thinking" people.

Truly, the lesson of the modern world is that no good deed of statesmanship goes unpunished.

Secondly, it is a mistake to believe that leadership qualities habitually propel those who possess them to the top. On the contrary. Most systems, democratic and traditionalist alike, tend to reward mediocrities, time-servers, appeasers, and base operators of all kinds.

Accident also plays a disturbingly large role in the emergence of good leaders. To take a striking example from the American past, George Washington's ambition for many years was to obtain a regular commission in the British army, and mightily did he strive for it. Had it not been for the obstinacy of the boobies at the Horse Guards, and what Washington himself then regarded as devilish bad luck, he would almost certainly have fought the War of Independence on the side of George III. But could independence have been secured without his tenacity of leadership, or would the Republic have made its new Constitution work without his magnanimous guidance as its first President?

So, too, any student of the years 1850-60 in the United States is bound to marvel at the odd conjunctions of unlikely events which made it possible for Abraham Lincoln to be elected President—on a minority vote—in 1860. And of course he was murdered for saving a great nation by giving it the leadership it needed in its agony.

In our own century, de Gaulle may have seen the unerring hand of providence propelling him to the top, but everyone else judged his career to be a weird succession of lucky chances. As for Churchill, he was always ready to acknowledge the huge element of luck, good and bad, which punctuated his uncertain career. (When crossing Park Avenue in New York, I often pause at the spot where, in the autumn of 1929, he was nearly killed for forgetting that Americans drive on the right.) He finally got the premiership in May 1940 because, by a miracle of self-restraint, he broke the habit of a lifetime and held his garrulous tongue at the crucial moment. Some four decades later, the way Margaret Thatcher became (despite her initial reluctance) leader of the Conservative party was akin to another miracle.

Still, granted the odds against any country's getting the leadership it needs at a particular

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time, the record of the United States is, on the whole, a good one. The four Presidents who followed Washington provided a continuity of aim and method that gave the new state stability and growth. John Quincy Adams was a disaster, but then Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren gave a dozen years of just the kind of leadership needed in a country ruled no longer by an oligarchy but by the *demos*.

There followed six duds, or near duds, in a row, culminating in the lassitude of James Buchanan. But all was redeemed by Lincoln, a democratic leader of genius. Of the next seven Presidents, only two, Grover Cleveland and William McKinley, were much above average. But in the 20th century, there have been six outstanding leaders: both Roosevelts, Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and Ronald Reagan—and I would be inclined to rate highly Calvin Coolidge and Richard Nixon as well.

No other major country over the past two centuries can boast a comparable roll call of ability, high-mindedness, and courage. One reason why the American Constitution, the first written one in world history, has worked so well, and why America has emerged as the richest and most powerful nation, is its success, on balance, in electing good leaders by universal mandate.

Now, however, there are signs that this success story may be ending. Although the number of presidential candidates in recent elections has shown no sign of tailing off, especially on the Democratic side, the quality seems to have declined sharply. At the same time, the number of obviously qualified candidates who decline to run at any price is growing.

The reasons for this are disturbing. One is the amount of cash now needed to sustain an effective candidacy and the severe conditions imposed by law on the business of raising it. Many able and honorable men, and still more women, simply cannot face the legal and moral complexities of financing a campaign.

But even more important is the combination of statutory and media intrusion into the lives of those seeking high office, as discussed at length in Suzanne Garment's excellent study, *Scandal: The Culture of Mistrust in American Politics*. Two of her points are worth reiterating here. The creation of a statutory special prosecutor, with unlimited funds, to inquire into alleged wrongdoing of public officeholders, the President in particular, is a potential dagger pointed at the heart of the executive. In view of the cost of a legal defense, this device can reduce even a wealthy man to penury though he be wholly innocent; to someone without private means, the only choice, once a prosecution is launched, is plea-bargaining, and even this can be very expensive.

A second point to which Mrs. Garment draws attention is the way a hostile media and the special prosecutor's office work hand in hand, the first exerting pressure for inquisitorial vigor, the second leaking scandalous details (often unverified) which produce yet more media pressure.

All these add immeasurably to the unavoidable risks of public office-seeking, and now undoubtedly deter honest and capable people from running (or accepting executive appointments). But whether the corner-cutters and the outright crooks are deterred, I very much doubt. It is a characteristic of the dishonest that they believe they will never be exposed or caught. The net result is a progressive lowering of the quality of candidates for public service.

Casting an eye over the list of successful presidential candidates of the past, I speculate on how many would have been deterred by the present-day habit of intrusion into presidential lives which is liable to degenerate into a witch-hunt at any moment. Would George Washington, already dubious about accepting the presidency, have put up with such treatment? The answer, surely, is no. Nor would Jefferson.

In fact, of the first dozen Presidents, I think perhaps the only one who would not have been deterred was Andrew Jackson, who had to endure media savaging over his marriage, his wife's past, his duelling and, not least, his relations with the wife of his War Secretary. He brazened all this out, though complaining loudly, and I suspect he would have coped with today's pressures too. But most of his contemporaries would have quailed, and this includes thick-skinned professionals like Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, both of whom had much to hide.

Of later figures who successfully ran for the White House, my guess is that a number would have been put off by the culture of mistrust: Theodore Roosevelt for many reasons, Woodrow Wilson because of his mistress, FDR because of his sexual adventures and his wife's supposed lesbianism, Harry Truman because of his business past, Dwight Eisenhower because of an extramarital affair. It is hard to see either John F. Kennedy or Lyndon Johnson achieving, still less keeping, the highest office under present conditions of legal and media inquisition.

This list speaks for itself. It is even possible that Lincoln, greatest of all Presidents, might have been discouraged from running by today's sleazy kind of media scrutiny, on account of uneasy and sometimes acrimonious relations with his wife. On second thought, though, I doubt it. Lincoln was too strong- and single-minded to be scared out of doing his duty. But not everyone, including many outstanding individuals, is strong-minded in this way.

That the best available talent should increasingly bar itself from the world's highest office because of the unwarranted stresses of legal and media scrutiny is a tragedy. For there is today no substitute for leadership from the White House.

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Nor does the problem end with the White House. Britain, like the United States, has no invasion-of-privacy law, and though its public figures do not have to face America's apparatus of legal terrorism, including special prosecutors, their life is equally made a misery by the workings of the media. In the last year alone, a dozen public figures, ranging from ministers to the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, have had their careers destroyed or damaged by brutal exposures which were in no way required by the public interest.

Few of Britain's greatest Prime Ministers of the past could have survived this kind of savaging—certainly not Sir Robert Walpole, who reveled in ill-gotten gains; or Pitt the Younger, who was often drunk; or Disraeli, who had a long history of financial skulduggery and mistresses (one of whom he shared with the Lord Chancellor); or Gladstone, who prowled the London streets picking up prostitutes for redemption; or Asquith, who enjoyed women and brandy excessively; or Lloyd George, who merely enjoyed women, sometimes on the carpet of the cabinet room. Churchill would have carried on because, like Lincoln, he was driven by an imperious sense of duty to his country. But I suspect Sir Anthony Eden would have been frightened off and Harold Macmillan would have been deterred by exposure of his wife's lifelong liaison with his colleague Bob Boothby and the child she bore him.

It is true that if similar standards of exposure were applied in France, little would change. The French tend to assume that their rulers are corrupt and libidinous and will grab whatever money and women they can get their hands on. Unless the corruption is blatant or the sex involves minors, the public does not take much interest. Mitterrand has pursued women relentlessly and has been involved in *affaires* of other kinds throughout his intolerably long career, but neither tendency has prevented him from governing France longer than anyone since Napoleon III.

A public figure is more at risk in Germany, as the case of Willy Brandt testifies, but on the whole, statutory and media exposure of the Anglo-Saxon type does not deter good men from striving for office there. Nevertheless, even in France and Germany, the best are beginning to be put off by the increasingly sleazy standards of public life—a factor which applies *a fortiori* in Spain and Italy.

I am not impressed by those who say that leaders of the caliber of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan are no longer necessary now that the cold war is over and the threat of nuclear conflict between the superpowers has been virtually removed. Good leaders of major nations are always desirable and often essential, as the whole of history teaches.

Moreover, in the post-cold-war world there are all kinds of new problems and dangers which require firm and wise handling, as the sorry mess we have made of the Bosnian crisis plainly reveals. There are also some nasty characters in charge of well-armed minor powers, who need to be checked in their aggressions just as firmly as the Hitlers and Stalins of yesteryear.

That strong leadership makes all the difference in handling these small wars is shown by comparing what happened in the Falklands and in Iraq. After the British had safely landed in the Falklands in 1982 and were poised for victory, Mrs. Thatcher was put under immense pressure, at home and abroad, to let the Argentine junta off the hook by accepting something well short of unconditional surrender. She flatly refused and went on to the end, thus ensuring that the Falklands problem would not recur in the foreseeable future, if ever, and, incidentally, ridding Argentina of its military dictatorship.

By contrast, in 1991, George Bush, without Mrs. Thatcher to stiffen him at the end as she had at the beginning, allowed himself to be persuaded or bullied into letting Saddam off the hook. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and Kurds have been murdered, and Saddam and his horrible dictatorship are still there, obliging the allies to devote vast sums and scarce military resources to watching his every move.

THERE are many regimes almost if not quite as bad as Saddam's and liable to cause trouble at any time. The Islamic fundamentalists in Iran are arming themselves as fast as they can, and similar regimes could take over in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Nor, I suspect, have we heard the last of Qaddafi, or even Castro, and the danger from a nuclear-armed North Korea is obvious.

Further south there is the huge, powerful, and still-Communist regime in China, rapidly building up an ocean-going navy, with carriers and aircraft bought cheaply from the Russians. There are more unresolved territorial and maritime claims in the Far East and Southeast Asia than anywhere else in the world, and China is involved in many of them. There is also the continuing Chinese genocide in Tibet, not to speak of the twenty million prisoners in China's gulag—far more than even Stalin had at any one time. Admittedly not so many die in China's camps as in Stalin's, but the treatment is in some respects even more cruel and lasts longer. Who is going to bring China into the civilized international community?

At the heart of all this lies the need for American leadership, and that need cannot be filled unless a way is found to improve the flow of the right kind of talent to the White House. That ought to be a priority question in Congress, with a view to changing the legislative barriers to quality, and a subject of intense study in every think tank in the land. Not just America but the rest of the world has an enormous stake in the outcome.

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Do the Jews Have a Future?

Robert S. Wistrich

OVER the past 50 years, the Jewish world has experienced a number of unprecedented and momentous changes which have transformed its structure, its internal composition, and its future prospects.

First and foremost, of course, has been the creation of an independent sovereign state in the ancient Jewish homeland, reconstituted for the first time in nearly 2,000 years. At the same time, the far-flung and extremely diverse Jewish Diaspora has enjoyed, in its Western branches, a sustained period of affluence, empowerment, influence, and social acceptance rare in the scarred annals of Jewish history.

Tremendous shifts of population have also taken place, with far-reaching consequences. In 1939, although the largest single Jewish community in the world already resided in the United States, the core of world Jewry (9.5 million or 57 percent) still lived in Europe. Most of these Jews were concentrated in the eastern half of the continent (Poland, the USSR, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria, etc.); their communities would soon be dealt the most devastating blow by Hitler's premeditated, cold-blooded effort to annihilate the Jewish people. By contrast, the British-mandated territory of Palestine held no more than 3 percent of the world Jewish population.

The Nazi terror that descended on Europe between 1939 and 1945 reduced the world Jewish population by almost six million, or one-third of its total numbers. Ever since that time, Europe has ceased to be the center of Jewish life and culture. Western Europe, it is true, has been less affected than Central Europe. Thus, there are over a million Jews in the European Union today, mainly concentrated in France, where the community has actually increased in size and vitality since 1945, and in Great Britain (where the opposite is the case). As for the East, estimates for European Russia fluctuate wildly between a low of 400,000 and a high of 1.5 million, and there is still a substantial Jewish community in Ukraine and a smaller one in Hungary (between 80,000 and 100,000 people).

But in general the global Jewish map has been much simplified. Today it is essentially split in a bipolar fashion between North America, mainly the U.S., and Israel (where nearly twice as many Jews reside as on the whole European continent). Outside these areas, and outside the centers of Western Europe and the former Soviet Union, the Jewish Diasporas of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania are mostly either static or dwindling, peripheral to the mainstream of contemporary Jewish history. (Still, it is worth noting that the Jewish communities of Brazil and Australia have increased in size, and now rank with Argentina, Canada, and South Africa.)

As the Israeli demographer Sergio Della Pergola points out, Jews today are concentrated in a smaller number of countries and constitute an even smaller part of an exploding world population (0.25 percent) than in 1939. On the other hand, DellaPergola also observes, they have largely become a middle-class people, inhabiting the core areas of the world's economic and political systems. To a much greater degree than in 1939, they are generally to be found in advanced-industrial countries that have high per-capita incomes, health standards, literacy rates, and cultural achievements. No less importantly, they can reap the fruits of full civic liberties and a democratic way of life.

All these positive benefits apply as well to Israel, despite the state of siege in which the country has had to live and the difficulties engendered by the absorption of less favored communities who often arrive penniless—whether from Russia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or Ethiopia. Israel, as a developed country with some military and diplomatic influence in the world, also provides a shield of security for Jews worldwide that manifestly did not exist before the Holocaust. When the case of Israel is added to the case of American Jewry, with its extraordinary economic and cultural influence and its intense involvement in the decision-making process of the world's most powerful country, then the contrast with the Jewish condition in 1945 becomes forceful indeed.

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Jews, in short, are no longer a people of homeless refugees, beggars vainly importuning the world's conscience, or passive objects of international charity. They are, especially in Israel and the United States, independent actors in the historical dramas of the postwar world, and their influence on the events of our time has been far from negligible. This dramatic recovery from the nadir of the Holocaust and its devastation—even today, world Jewry is still three million short of its numbers in 1939—is a stunning achievement and a genuine triumph over adversity.

THE existence of Israel has clearly served in the past 45 years as a catalyst of Jewish identification and an undeniable core of Jewish cohesion and continuity. In an increasingly centrifugal world, it is the main centripetal force working for Jewish unity. This is so not only because of the security and freedom which it symbolizes, but also because it has developed a self-sustaining economy, culture, and a collective identity of a new kind.

As the old Diaspora languages (Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, etc.) inevitably wither, replaced by English as the dominant tongue of the worldwide Diaspora, the modernized Hebrew of Israel has become the main guardian of a distinctive, autonomous Jewish culture. Moreover, Israel alone contains 40 percent of the school-age Jewish population of the world, and about two-thirds of those enrolled in Jewish schools. Clearly, in the future, it will play the key role in maintaining and transmitting Jewish ethnic and religious identity. This greatly strengthens its claims to be considered the core of Jewish peoplehood, especially when its situation is contrasted with that of the fissiparous, acculturated Jewries of the Western Diaspora.

Nowhere is the distinction between Israel and the Diaspora clearer than in the area of intermarriage, the single most powerful centrifugal force in world Jewry today. Seventy years ago, in the United States, the intermarriage rate was below 5 percent; by 1970 it had leaped to 32 percent, and in 1990 it stood at an all-time high of 57 percent. By way of contrast, in pre-Holocaust Poland (then the largest Jewish community of Europe) intermarriage was still below 1 percent and in nearly half of world Jewry it did not exceed 5 percent before 1939. Only in highly assimilated Jewish communities like Germany, Austria, Italy, Holland, or Australia did it remotely approach what it has commonly become in the contemporary Diaspora. And today, the American pattern is duplicated in France, Britain, Hungary, Italy, the ex-USSR, and elsewhere.

Great Britain is a good illustration of the trend. Between 1960 and 1990, the intermarriage rate rose almost tenfold. When one adds the high Jewish divorce rate (30 percent, close to general British levels), it is clear that the British Jewish family is beginning to fail. Thus, a highly educated, successful, and upwardly mobile Jewish community has found its numbers depleted by one-third over the course of 30 years.

The problem is not exclusively British or American, but part of a general pattern in open societies. It is the downside of the affluence, the range of opportunity, the social mobility, and the cultural integration which postwar modernity has offered to the Jews. In pre-1939 Europe and America, low intermarriage rates reflected a very different set of circumstances: societies which still discriminated against or even persecuted Jews; a more cohesive way of life internally; the greater influence of Orthodoxy; and a deeper knowledge of Jewish history and culture.

In contemporary society, except for the enclaves of Orthodoxy, these factors no longer operate. Jewish distinctiveness has diminished, while assimilation has increased; and there is far less opposition among either Jews or non-Jews to intermarriage. So it is that economic and political freedom, tolerance, pluralism, and social acceptance threaten to accomplish by peaceful, tranquil, and gradual means what Nazi barbarism could not complete in the terror of the Holocaust: the disappearance of the Jewish people.

THIS is surely the greatest paradox of the postwar Diaspora. Never has it enjoyed such optimal conditions, and never has it seemed, in the longer term, more like an endangered species. Its continuity and distinctiveness as an ethnic group are seriously in doubt. This internal hemorrhaging of both body and spirit raises fundamental questions about the *raison d'être* of Diaspora Jewry. Can a people which miraculously recovered from the black hole of the Holocaust, which survived two millennia of exile, expulsions, pogroms, and genocide, be reconciling itself to fading quietly from the scene? And if not, how are the continuity and survival of the Jewish people to be assured in conditions of freedom and affluence? These are "Jewish questions," more perplexing and difficult in some ways than the shadow of anti-Semitism that has accompanied the Jews through their long march in exile.

At first glance, traditional and Orthodox Jews stand secure in splendid isolation amid the confusing signals of modernity. Though decimated in the Holocaust, they have disproved all the predictions of their demise. The most extreme among them, the ultra-Orthodox, are the fastest-growing segment in contemporary Jewry. With their rabbis and yeshivas, their arranged marriages and extremely high birth rates, these communities have not only recovered, they are flourishing. In Israel (where they number about 350,000), they have made their influence felt in

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public life, eclipsing the traditional religious parties despite their reluctance to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish state. In the Diaspora, where their numerical strength is similar, they have had a growing impact on mainstream Orthodox institutions.

True, Jewish fundamentalism involves such a thorough rejection of secular modernity that it is difficult to imagine its achieving a long-term impact on contemporary Jewry. But as a symptom, it points to a general malaise.

The name of the malaise is secularism. The majority of contemporary Jews, whether in Israel or in the Diaspora, remain and are likely to remain secularists. But they are secularists who now know that the Jewish identity of their children and grandchildren can no longer be taken for granted. Nor, despite the existence of a Jewish state, can they assume the collective survival of a unified Jewish people.

Israel offers the model of a cohesive Jewish ethnicity; it is a bulwark against the forces of Diaspora assimilation and a haven of safety in times of persecution. In Israel, there is no problem of intermarriage or of a low Jewish birth rate, no crisis of Jewish education as such, and no dilemma in transmitting Jewish values to the next generation. But Israel is also a distinctive national entity with its own dynamics, interests, and mental horizons, often very different from those of the Diaspora. Moreover, despite the strength of the existing ties between the two communities, Israel is founded on a Zionist outlook which ultimately denies the viability of the Diaspora. In the Zionist perception, the Diaspora is a transitory condition, and a secure existence is possible only through a return to the sources of Jewish life, to the land of one's ancestors, and above all to the Hebrew language.

This is where the difference strikes deepest. For although Diaspora Jews cannot compete with Zionism's territorial rootedness, they, too, have begun to put down roots of their own in the postwar world—especially in the enlightened, emancipated, secular West. In the new multicultural, multiethnic mosaic of our Western democracies, Jews no longer appear quite so distinctive. Other ethnic minorities currently bear the brunt of racism, xenophobia, and intolerance, while Jews often seem like insiders or even well-integrated parts of the Gentile establishment. Jewish "otherness" is still there, but it is less offensive to the Gentile eye, and since the Holocaust, anti-Semitism has been significantly muted. All this would seem to render the classic Zionist case against the Diaspora less and less credible on purely political grounds.

STILL, things are not so simple.

Take anti-Semitism. While lacking the lethal vitality of the Nazi paradigm, it has nevertheless been a tenacious presence on the international postwar scene. It acquired a new lease on life through the cold war and the emergence of Israel, especially in the Soviet bloc and the Arab-Muslim world. In the form of anti-Zionism, it proved to be one of the most persistent weapons in the hands of those seeking to delegitimize and put an end to the existence of an independent Jewish state in the Middle East. In Communist-controlled countries it was exploited for domestic and foreign-policy purposes alike. And in conjunction with rising Arab nationalism and an aggressive, militant Muslim fundamentalism, it seriously infected the Arab world.

In the Middle East, one effect of the rise of Arab anti-Semitism was to accelerate the departure of long-established Jewish communities from their Arab and Muslim host societies. The bulk of this "Oriental" or "Sephardi" Jewry ended up in Israel, thereby paradoxically fortifying the Jewish state, helping to ensure its viability—and strengthening the case for Zionism.

Another paradoxical result of this extraordinary migration was the revival of Sephardi Jewry itself, today the majority segment in Israeli society. Despite a period of initial deprivation, and despite the discrimination they encountered at various levels in a society that had been fashioned by Ashkenazi settlers from Eastern Europe, the Sephardim have now come into their own. Zionism, originally a European solution to Europe's "Jewish Question," has thus acted as the modernizing vehicle for the ascent of non-Europeans and for their encounter with the West within a Jewish national framework.

Many Sephardim were, and remain, deeply distrustful of Arab intentions, and generally more traditionalist in outlook—two factors that helped to fuel the previously dormant nationalist reflexes of Israel in the late 1970's and 1980's. This pattern may change with time, and it is even conceivable that the Sephardim may yet help to ease Israel's integration into the Middle East as an accepted and equal partner in the development of the region.

But that, of course, depends on the prospects for a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such a settlement would remove one of the darkest shadows over postwar Jewish existence—the physical danger to an Israel surrounded by bellicose enemies bent on its destruction. Whether or not this danger is beginning to ebb, however, it remains the fact that what has successfully kept it at bay for the past 45 years is the military determination and prowess of Israel.

By transforming the image of the Jew into that of an efficient warrior heroically defending his homeland, Zionism also gave new confidence, backbone, and pride to the Jewish Diaspora. The Six-Day War of 1967 was the great benchmark here, mobilizing the Jewish world first in an-

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guished fear and then in a resurgence of ethnic pride. For communities like Soviet Jewry (termed "the Jews of Silence" by Elie Wiesel only a year earlier), the Israeli triumph in June 1967 provided a new lease on life and the courage to fight oppression. The struggle for Soviet Jewry—one of the great causes of the postwar Jewish world—helped to salvage a community which had been cut off for decades from its brothers and sisters by Communist totalitarianism. The exodus of Soviet Jews to Israel and the West was one of the first breaches in the Communist fortress, and for two decades it served to unify the Jewish world in a common fight for freedom, dignity, and national identity.

The end of the cold war and the demise of Communism—which reinforced the exodus from the former Soviet Union—have once again underscored the elemental necessity of the Jewish state as a Noah's ark in a world where Jews may at any time find themselves victimized. Indeed, the basic Zionist case has been vindicated repeatedly over the past century, whenever economic, political, and international crises have threatened Jewish existence and exposed Jewish vulnerability.

Even from the perspective of the late 20th-century West, this is a reality that only the most self-deluded utopians can afford to dismiss. The Western world, despite its underlying prosperity and stability, is beset by high unemployment, recession, racial problems, and uncertainty about the future. In Europe, ethnic conflicts are rampant and have already produced a genocidal war in ex-Yugoslavia. Fascism and neo-Nazism are on the rise, and semi-respectable neopopulist parties spouting racist and anti-Semitic slogans are increasing their vote across Europe.

Beyond the borders of Europe, there stands the enigma of the former Soviet Union: despite the new freedoms and opportunities there, it would be foolhardy to vouch for the prospects of Russian Jewry. The future of Boris Yeltsin and his "democratic" revolution appears extremely shaky, faced as it is with a brown-red opposition of real strength. Anti-Semitism has played an important political role in cementing this anti-Yeltsin opposition, and also in the rise of a popular neofascist movement whose chances increase as Russia's economic Chernobyl spreads.

The politics of survival, then, will continue to be relevant in the Jewish world of the future and to act as a cementing force across the fissures, the divisions, and the centrifugal trends that will continue to afflict it. But survival is also only the beginning. With or without a stable peace in the Middle East, with or without open conflict elsewhere, the issues of Jewish education, the Jewish family, and the continuity of the Jewish people will assume a greater centrality—they will have to, if the forces of decomposition and disarray are to be confronted and checked.

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Under the Rising Sun

Charles Horner

WHAT is the meaning for us of the "Pacific Century" and the "Asian Resurgence"? It may be that we are on the verge of a mutually reinforcing golden age of economic prosperity and intercultural efflorescence. But it is also conceivable that there will be persistent conflict and perhaps even a violent breakdown. We have had, after all, three wars in the last half-century involving, in one way or another, both China and Japan, and even in periods of comparative calm we have felt—in the best Asian fashion—inchoate anxiety and unsettling disquiet.

We have also had to develop the ability to evaluate predictions about future threats from Asia. Some have been vague, like the "yellow peril"; others more precise, like forecasts as far back as the 1920's and 1930's about a coming Japanese-American showdown. We later conducted extensive public debate about the danger of a Communist regime in China, about China's possession of nuclear weapons, about the backing it gave to anti-American "wars of national liberation," about its relationship to the Soviet Union and to Soviet imperial ambitions in Asia. We were concerned also with the lesser states, as we still are with North Korea and its putative nuclear arsenal. It is as if new emanations appear even as the older ones are retreating into the shadows.

Thus, it cannot be altogether surprising that Japan has again taken on something of the sinister aspect it had a half-century ago. Throughout the 1980's, for example, we learned about the emerging Japanese superstate, about Japan, Incorporated, about Japan as Number One, about our need to resign ourselves to a Japanese boss sometime in our future. And then, quite abruptly, we learned in the early 1990's of spectacular "corrections" in the Japanese real-estate and stock markets, and next of a prolonged recession. Karen Elliott House of the *Wall Street Journal* reported this past February that after "stock-market collapse, export contraction, credit crunch, and plummeting profits, worse is yet to come."

At the same time, however, we were also being advised not to become overly complacent. "The idea that the Japanese economy is in deep trouble—that the U.S. has turned the tables on a struggling Japan—is simply a myth," wrote one observer. In other words, even if we have survived one Japanese onslaught, we may have a second in store.

We now know that the evaluation of any threat from Asia can reflect a deeper political argument. Some people who were once not very much concerned about China's export of revolution are now very worried about Japan's export of computer chips; the same people who once trusted a benign Uncle Ho now have large suspicions about the ruthless men from MITI.

Still, there has to be more to it than the ease with which politicians of different stripes can manipulate the varying images of Asia and Asians. One hopes that there is something really to be known, especially about a consequential people like the Japanese. But even if it is daunting to try to get at the true nature of these faraway people of whom we know little, it is useful to arrange the questions. In so doing, we will discover that now, as always, there is something new under the rising sun.

THE Japanese were a formidable and accomplished people long before they met up with us back in 1853. That, as most schoolchildren used to know, was the year Commodore Matthew Perry and his fleet opened Japan to the world. Alarmed by the spread of Western influence into Asia, and alerted (particularly by the West's rough handling of the Chinese) to what might be in store for them, the Japanese began the revamping of their country in 1868—the famous Meiji Restoration.

Soon thereafter, they turned outward. In 1895, they defeated China in war and annexed the island of Taiwan. In 1905, they destroyed imperial Russia's power in the northern Pacific and then annexed Korea in 1910. Exploiting the West's preoccupation with Europe in World War I, they built up their position in China. They also took over the once German-owned Marshall and Caroline Islands in the central Pacific. They sent troops into Siberia in support of the "whites" in the Russian civil war, and did not evacuate Vladivostok until 1923. In 1931, they detached Manchu-

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ria from the rest of China and set up a puppet regime under the last of China's Manchu emperors who, as a child, had been deposed in 1912. In 1937, they invaded China proper and gained control of the coastal regions and chunks of the interior. In December 1941, they attacked Pearl Harbor, while simultaneously launching invasions of the Philippines, Malaya, and Indonesia, all of which fell in short order.

So, in the space of 75 years, Japan went from an exotic and little-known Asian country of uncertain prospects to the owner of an enormous empire. It reached from the Western Aleutians at the edge of North America to the Amur in northeast Asia, from the heart of China deep into the central Pacific, from mainland Indochina and throughout the adjacent archipelagos all the way to the edge of Australia.

Yet fewer than four years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, all this—the work of two generations—was gone. The imperial system in whose name these efforts had been undertaken barely survived even symbolically, and the physical ruin of the country was nearly total. Two of its cities were destroyed by atomic bombs, and the international war-crimes tribunal which sat in Tokyo from 1946 to 1948 laid out a record of extraordinary brutality.

We in the West would call this a cautionary tale, though its moral and practical implications are seldom if ever discussed in Japan itself. There is the occasional embarrassment, as when Japan's Minister of Justice was forced to resign last May because he had publicly asserted that the notorious Rape of Nanking in 1937 had been a "fabrication." Minister Nagano was dismissed mostly because his remarks had caused protests in neighboring countries; but lost in the furor was his underlying premise, namely, that Japan was not an aggressor in those years, but an underminer of Western imperialism.

As for the larger meaning of Japan's rise and fall, an ethicist might see in it the inevitable retribution for arrogance—*hubris* and *nemesis*. A strategist might make the more mundane point that a nation of limited resources should not have taken on the United States, Britain, China, and the Soviet Union at the same time. But all should wonder how this story informs Japan's present ambitions, how it directs the great bursts of energy of which the country is obviously quite capable.

By the 1960's, the Japanese of Pearl Harbor and Bataan were forgotten in America and the orthodox view of Japan was now dominated by our political approval of its transition from crazed garrison state to peace-loving society and our aesthetic appreciation of its cultural refinements.

The political standing of postwar Japan owed much to Edwin Reischauer (1906-90), the most distinguished of America's authorities on Japan, a pioneer in the field of Japan studies, a longtime professor at Harvard, and ambassador to Tokyo for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. He came to represent the high view of what happened in Japan between 1930 and 1945.

In its simplest form, this interpretation saw the period as an aberration. Japan in the 1920's was well set on a democratic course. In this, it was part of an era, resembling our own time, in which democratic ways made seemingly enormous progress in Europe and Asia as old empires collapsed. The ascendancy of the militarists and expansionists was only a detour, and one with a predictable dead end.

In this view, then, the reforms brought to Japan by the post-World War II American occupation were seeds sown in ground better prepared than we realized, seeds which would, over time, produce a firmly rooted plant.

This transformation of Japan's image was reinforced by its unique experience of nuclear war. Over time, the fact that atomic weapons had been used against Japan came to overshadow and then to displace altogether the appalling crimes Japan itself had committed during its hegemony in Asia. Indeed, the manipulation of the Hiroshima event by international "peace forces" and by the Japanese themselves allowed Japan to undergo a metamorphosis from evil perpetrator to innocent victim and somehow even made it seem that Japan had been a nation of pacifists all along.

Meanwhile, something else was also contributing to the image of a kinder and gentler Japan, and that was a new interpretation of Japanese culture, traditional and modern. What Reischauer did in the political realm, Donald Keene, now professor emeritus at Columbia, did in the cultural.* Keene, as translator and historian, played an essential role in introducing Japanese literature to our country in the years following World War II, and in interpreting it as delicate, ethereal, precious, subtle, evanescent, and reticent. In so doing, it was necessary to pass over some problematic elements in Japan's literary culture, especially the pronounced presence in modern Japanese literature of what we would regard as the twisted, deviant, and perverted, and its loving and exquisite portrayals of the sensual, the sadistic, and the suicidal. It may be that, just as Reischauer interpreted Japan's bad political behavior as the exception and not the rule, a literary historian like Keene might have wanted to do something comparable in the cultural realm.

These men and others did indeed produce an era of good feeling, a golden age of Japanophilia, if you will. But it has now

* Keene's autobiography, *On Familiar Terms: A Journey Across Culture*, has recently been published by Kodansha (292 pp., $23.00).

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given way to a much tougher analysis of the relation between our two peoples. Public discourse about Japan is no longer dominated by scholars but by advocates of one kind or another, wholly preoccupied with the commercial competition.

Interestingly, the older generation of Japanophiles, who had had direct experience of real war with the Japanese, were not thereby turned into Japan-haters. The less deadly economic combat of today, however, has produced stronger feelings and greater determination to get at the sources of Japanese aggressiveness with a new set of questions. Is the Japanese expansionist impulse still manifested in an internally well-coordinated commercial imperialism? Is it a carefully constructed strategy or an atavistic compulsion? Or is it just another day at the office?

Bill Emmott, now editor of the *Economist*, once served as that magazine's correspondent in Tokyo. His recent book, *Japanophobia*,* expands on the theme of his earlier volume, *The Sun Also Sets*. The titles say it all, for Emmott is one who believes that, at the end of the day, the laws of economics will out.

From *Japanophobia*, readers learn that the Japanese, including especially their vaunted industrial-policy bureaucrats, make their share of mistakes; that Japan's influence over the American economy is woefully exaggerated; that the Japanese economy's seeming ability to levitate is but an optical illusion. Indeed, according to a recent comprehensive report in Emmott's magazine, in the past 40 years the Japanese government has ended up backing slow-growth industries; the "clever technocrats [have] picked and supported losers"; and "though Japan's economic success is obvious, industrial policy may well have hindered rather than advanced the cause."

For Emmott, not only are the laws of economics the same for all, but the Japanese are also like everyone else in their foreign-investment behavior. It is therefore wrong for Americans to be fearful of Japanese investment in our country, and would be a mistake for the American government to act against it.

For a seasoned Japan-watcher like Emmott, Japanophobia seems, in the end, to be the result of misinformation or disinformation, both of which are correctable by accurate data. Still, Emmott's faith notwithstanding, the "facts" are not always relevant. When the rise of Japan is seen not just as an economic but as a political phenomenon, with philosophical, ethical, and intellectual meanings, invocations of tried-and-true Anglo-American laissez-faire economics will fall on deaf ears. And when the new and astonishing pace of Asian economic development can somehow be fitted into a perennial critique of American capitalism as something forever in dire need of government direction and renovation, those facts will have an even harder time.

There is ample reason to think that recent economic and political successes in Asia validate Anglo-American tradition, that the Asians have attained their new prosperity by emulating us, and that the American "strategic umbrella" provided the requisite security to make this possible, even at the cost of war in Korea and Indochina. If true, these successes should boost our self-esteem (to borrow a term of current lingo). But now a contrary notion is being argued, and it is most comprehensively presented in James Fallows's recent book, *Looking at the Sun*.† Fallows, Washington editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, has assembled his lengthy writings previously published in that magazine—writings based on an extended stay in Asia and a study of history and economics—in order to argue that the Japanese know what they are doing, but that we do not know what we are doing. Even less do we know what they are doing.

FALLOWS's book reprises the now-familiar theme in which the Japanese fuse state power, corporate ambition, and private greed to achieve awe-inspiring results. This achievement, he urges us to conclude, vindicates a way of thinking which Westerners in their naive approach to business and economics do not understand or tend to ignore, but which they would do well to try to emulate:

> When Westerners talk about business and economics, they usually just talk about business and economics—that is, they view the rise and fall of certain industries as if this were a matter of purely commercial interest. But as seen from Asia, the economic expansion of Japan is not primarily an economic phenomenon at all. It is better understood as a political achievement.

It is, upon reflection, remarkable that Fallows would accuse the contemporary United States of naiveté on such matters, and would advocate a fusion of commerce and politics to replace our too laid-back notions. For when he was working in the Carter White House in the late 1970's, it was the allegedly nefarious practices of American multinational corporations and their government collaborators that were widely thought by American liberals (among whom we should include Fallows) to be the problem.

For example, American oil companies, acting in accordance with a grand strategic design, were presumed to have brought an enormous share of the world's petroleum resources under the sway of the United States. Even more sinisterly, bankers, industrialists, the State Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency were all said to have worked together to eliminate potential commercial rivals in various countries, not shrinking from bribery and intimidation, or even from instigat-

* Times Books, 261 pp., $25.00.
† Pantheon, 528 pp., $25.00.

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ing *coups d'état*. Our ability to do this was further reinforced by our worldwide military establishment. As for the strength of some of our industrial enterprises, their "competitiveness"—as we would now say—benefited from enormous subsidies provided through large Department of Defense and NASA budgets. For want of a better term, let us call these arrangements America, Inc.

Generally speaking, American liberals thought this situation was very bad, and required correction in all its aspects. In fact, nothing less than an entirely New International Economic Order (NIEO) was considered capable of coping with it. Overseas, such an order would have to be administered through unprecedented international cooperation, especially within the instrumentalities of the United Nations, but also through the creation of various political and economic blocs modeled on the OPEC cartel. Here at home, legislative, fiscal, and regulatory remedies were to be applied.

As it turned out, the NIEO did not amount to much. But the domestic effort to constrain America, Inc. made definite headway, not least in entrenching the idea that American business success is evidence of American moral failure. Now, in the 1990's, here are people like Fallows saying they are disquieted by the change in our relative economic position and implying that it is the ordinary American's naiveté, rather than the progress of their own political agenda, which may have brought this situation about. And they hope to play upon widespread anxiety about the economic consequences of their agenda to reconstitute a new kind of America, Inc., under a new aegis.

The 1990's version of America, Inc.—of business-government cooperation to restore our competitiveness—seems to be little more than an array of domestic social projects, but the "theoretical" underpinnings of the effort form the most interesting and novel part of Fallows's book. Here, instead of relying on a peculiarly "Asian" outlook, he finds a useful text in the thinking of the German economist Friedrich List (1789-1846).

Fallows notes that the current American world view derives from three Englishmen—Isaac Newton, John Locke, and Adam Smith. But it is German thought, represented by Hegel and List, that was "carefully studied, adapted, and applied in parts of continental Europe and in Asia, notably in Japan." In this German view, economic growth is not so automatic and self-regulating as Adam Smith posits; rather, development is a deliberate process. What ends up doing the society as a whole the most good is not the sum total of individual decisions; nor is the ultimate good of a society measured by its level of consumption. Rather, the best measure is what a society does for producers. As Fallows summarizes the point:

> A society was worth as much as it could make, not as much as it could buy. . . . The German view was more concerned with the welfare—indeed, sovereignty—of people in groups—in communities, in nations. This is its most obvious link with the Asian economic strategy of today.

To bring his case home, Fallows goes on to claim that none other than one of our own Founders, Alexander Hamilton, may have shared List's opinions. Fallows even suggests that something like List's outlook informed the first century-and-a-half of American economic history: "Consumer welfare took second place. . . . The United States, trying to catch up with Britain, behaved more or less like the leaders of Meiji and postwar Japan trying to catch up with the United States." Hence it becomes possible to find some philosophical common ground between ourselves and our Asian competitors.

Yet as Fallows himself concedes, the specific content of the doctrines involved seems to rule out any prospect of long-term harmony. "In the German view," he writes, "economics is not a matter of 'right' or 'wrong,' . . . it is merely a matter of strong or weak . . . If a nation decides to help itself—by protecting its own industries, by discriminating against foreign products—then that is a *decision* not a sin."

It is hard to believe, however, that Fallows genuinely imagines a powerful United States on the move in the world, but without that patina of sin so necessary to liberal thinking about American power and American foreign policy. He certainly is of no disposition to revive the muscular America, Inc. of earlier days. The Great Power attributes of a great power seem to interest him not at all; for him, evidently, our revival can be had solely through soft social programs at home and tough talk about trade abroad.

People who pay attention to Japan often remark on the seeming contradiction between its sustained economic success, supposedly well-orchestrated by its permanent government, and the apparent chaos of its parliamentary political system. With the resignation of Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro this past April, Japan will have had six governments in the past five years (including the current one of Prime Minister Hata), four of which fell because of allegations of corruption. It is as if parliamentary government were an irrelevant gloss on whatever else happens in the country—or that the part of Japan most Western in appearance may be least consequential in substance.

There is another disappointment. One might think that Japan, as the oldest and the only completely functioning parliamentary democracy in East Asia, would somehow be involved in the

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great contemporary discussion of universal values vs. regional particularism. On the face of it, Japan demonstrates the relevance of Western-derived principles of representative government and human rights—indeed, Japan might well be cited as *the* great example of the possibility for profound transformation in a traditional political culture. But what if two generations of democratic practice in Japan have had *no* real transforming effect, as sometimes seems the case? Then our expectations for the rest of Asia must be drastically altered.

This past March, then-Prime Minister Hosokawa was in China only a week after the visit of Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Christopher's mission had focused on the relationship between trade and human rights in Sino-American relations, and reportedly went badly. Hosokawa, on the other hand, was said to have agreed with Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng that the Western concept of human rights should not be applied to all nations. "I told him that it is not proper to force a Western or European-type democracy onto others. I made the same statement when I met President Clinton last November in Seattle," Hosokawa reported after his visit.

Perhaps Hosokawa's grandfather would have liked to say the same thing to President Harry Truman if he had had the chance; but of course he did not. The origin of Japanese democracy in the shame and powerlessness of total defeat is something all Japanese take into account, and something which a supremely self-confident yet subtle China knows how to play upon. At the same time, it is apparent that China, not Japan, is becoming the heart of the new East Asian system. Is it inevitable that Japan will be wholly absorbed into it? Or will the American model still be able to pose some counter-attraction to China's powerful political and cultural gravity?

In this respect, the evolution of Sino-Japanese relations is apt to have an enormous influence on us. The two countries represent an awesome combination, and one would hope for an American diplomacy bent on recognizing this danger and doing what it can to prevent it. But at the moment, we have a Clinton-type diplomacy which has estranged both countries from us; it, in turn, appears to rest on a Fallows-type analysis which, if adopted by the Chinese and Japanese themselves, would serve only to push the two of them closer together.

In the meantime, Japan is free to move a certain strategic distance from the United States now that the common Soviet enemy has disappeared. It is also predisposed to move a certain emotional and psychological distance from us, partially but not primarily because of congenital anti-Japanese sentiment in American political culture. Whatever the interest of Fallows's complex tracing of East Asian practice to continental European precedent, his own analysis does not usefully distinguish between the economic damage the Japanese may have done to us and the damage we have done to ourselves. And the methods he appears to think we should employ against them—higher tariffs? import quotas? export targets?—would, if strongly applied, be counterproductive; weakly applied, as they are today, they work only to embarrass our country further.

Current policy toward China—to borrow a formulation from that country's Foreign Minister—trapped the Clinton administration in a web of its own weaving; the President found himself unable to do anything but repair lamely to his predecessor's standard, even though he had roundly denounced it. Current policy toward Japan has also become a self-made snare. In the latest go-round, it began with a demand for "numerical targets" to improve our trade balance. But Japan's surplus grew. This led to an effort to lower the value of the dollar, so as to make Japanese goods more expensive. But our Treasury's manipulations were too good by half, and the dollar then had to be propped up.

The result of all this, as the *New York Times* reported, was to discourage the Japanese from investing in American markets, thereby complicating the already complex task of balancing trade, investment, interest rates, and the rest of it. In sum, so the *Times* report goes, "the Clinton strategy toward Japan is moribund, unlikely to produce the expected results and probably going to have to be redesigned."

Is there any hope that this twin fiasco will engender even a bit of humility among those who now conduct our foreign relations? After all, these affairs are being run by men whose claim to legitimacy is that they understood "Asian realities" twenty years ago, that they could see deeply beneath the surface of things as others could not. As they look toward the East again, we shall find out what they make of their opportunity to prove it.

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The Politics of Dissent

Gertrude Himmelfarb

IN *Culture and Anarchy*, written more than a century ago, Matthew Arnold described a phenomenon that we tend to think is unique to our times rather than his. He expressed it in religious terms: it was the particular pride of Dissenters in dissenting, of Nonconformists in nonconforming, of Protestants in protesting. He quoted the motto of one Nonconformist journal: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion."

American radical intellectuals of a later generation might not recognize themselves in that religious guise. Nor would they welcome Arnold's characterization of their mode of thought as parochial, provincial, and philistine. But some of them, like the writer and critic Dwight Macdonald (1906-82), have been, in fact, secular correlatives of Arnold's Dissenters—every bit as sectarian in their dissent, and as proud of their status as dissenters. Michael Wreszin's new biography of Macdonald * is not only a detailed account of the life of this preeminent dissenter but also a typology of the politics of dissent in this country.

Macdonald was the intellectual archetype of the species, but not the social. Indeed, socially he was untypical. A Wasp among a predominance of Jews (the other most conspicuous non-Jew in this circle, Mary McCarthy, was a quarter-Jew), a product of Exeter and Yale (like his father before him), and married to a woman with an independent income, he hardly fit the stereotype of the New York radical intellectual. Perhaps for that reason, because he was something of an oddity—a "*Shabbes Goy*," it was sometimes said—he personified to excess some of the attributes of the group. He was even more self-righteous and moralistic, polemical and acerbic, doctrinaire and sectarian, and with all this, more volatile, adopting and discarding ideas and ideologies with great ease.

Macdonald's political saga is familiar. A fellow-traveling Communist in the early 1930's (while working for that bastion of capitalism, *Fortune* magazine), he became a fellow-traveling Trotskyist after the Moscow Trials. He officially joined the (Trotskyist) Socialist Workers Party in September 1939, just in time to participate in a major factional fight and become one of the charter members of the new Workers Party. Finding that party, too, overly Leninist and Marxist, he left within two years. In the absence of any other organization, he transferred his loyalties to the group around the radical/modernist quarterly *Partisan Review*, where he served as an editor, resigning in 1943 when the other editors ceased to oppose American participation in World War II. He then founded his own magazine, *Politics*, an enterprise that lasted all of five years.

Through all these mutations and deviations, two elements remained constant: his contempt for America—for its culture even more than its economy and polity; and his opposition to the war against Hitler, not on pacifist grounds but because he thought capitalism insufficiently better than Nazism to justify that war. He had no illusions about the totalitarian nature of Nazism; in planning to write a book on dictatorship, he had actually read *Mein Kampf* and histories of the rise of Nazism. But he had long been convinced that fascism was "superior to liberal capitalism as a technique for running modern society," and at the same time (not entirely consistently) that the capitalist "corporate elite" exercised a dictatorship not unlike that of the fascists and Nazis: "Europe has its Hitlers but we have our Rotarians."

In his opposition to the war, Macdonald remained unyielding, before and during the war (and afterward, although on different grounds). There was little to choose from, he maintained early on, between the warring "imperialist camps." America and England were bound to become fascistic, and only by means of a "Third Camp"—the rising of the masses under the leadership of a revolutionary socialist party—could Nazism be overcome.

When the English poet Stephen Spender announced that, in spite of his own socialist convictions and his distaste for the English political establishment, he was prepared to fight "on the side of the Chamberlain system against fascism," Macdonald excoriated him for abandoning his principles, and reminded him that his precious

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* *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald.* Basic Books, 590 pp., $30.00.

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freedom was a "class commodity"; it might be freedom for an "upper-class literary man" but not for "a cook or a bus driver or a coal miner." Spender commented on this high-minded refusal to accept the lesser evil: "It's as much as if Christians were to say, 'We cannot support the war unless angels armed with swords swoop down from the sky and destroy the Nazis.'" To take Macdonald's stance, Spender added, was to join the party of "hopeless angels."

Spender was wiser than he knew. It was not only for the duration of the war that Macdonald joined the party of "hopeless angels"; it was for much of his life. Through most of the divagations in his career, this was the party that he remained faithful to, the party of dissent that could not tolerate any lesser evil. As his early hero Trotsky had held to a theory of permanent revolution—the continuing revolution of the proletariat throughout the world that alone could sustain socialism in Russia—so Macdonald implicitly held to a theory of permanent dissent as the only basis for a moral politics.

IT WAS this spirit that imbued *Politics* magazine, which, by Macdonald's own estimate as well as that of his admirers, was the high point of his career. (Although its circulation never rose above 5,000, it had an influence in the New York intellectual community far beyond that number, and was even read abroad by aficionados of radicalism.) The magazine was dedicated to the proposition that radical politics must be subjected to a moral standard, a yardstick of "basic values."

During the war, this standard damned the Allies as well as the fascists: "Two horrors confront each other in Europe," Macdonald announced just before VE-Day, "the dying Nazi horror and the surviving Allied horror." And after the war the same standard found the United States as corrupt as the Soviet Union. Just as the "bureaucratic collectivism" of Communism was the first step to totalitarianism, so the American "military-industrial complex" was preparing for a third world war, while capitalism was creating a degraded popular culture and a dehumanized mass society.

In retrospect, looking at the magazine from the perspective of the present, Macdonald's biographer finds in it other themes: a protest against racial prejudice (in the case of Japanese-Americans as well as blacks), an article pleading for the toleration of homosexuals, and some intimations of feminism. But these provided only an occasional respite from the main concerns of the journal.

The most memorable contributions were by the French pacifist Simone Weil and by Macdonald himself. Weil's "*The Iliad*, or The Poem of Force" (translated from the French by Mary McCarthy) was an eloquent affirmation of the pacifist faith, denouncing not only this "imperialist" war but all war—indeed, any exercise of force—as inevitably reducing men to things, dehumanizing and finally destroying both its victims and its perpetrators.

Macdonald's long essay, "The Root Is Man," was no less uncompromising. "The root for mankind," he quoted a pronouncement of the young Marx, "is man himself." Man: not history, or science, or economics, but the individual man, a moral being whose ethical dynamic derives from "absolute and nonhistorical values, such as truth and justice." (Later, he expanded this to include love as well.)

This was not, Macdonald insisted, a retreat to religion, for he was invoking no transcendent authority, nothing but the values of man himself. The war had exposed the evils of science and technology, of nationalism and the bureaucratic state, of Marxism and conventional liberalism. Thus, the true "radical" (as distinct from the political "progressive") follows not the path of history but his own path; he is concerned not with what is but with what ought to be; and he is not afraid of the label, "utopian socialism." Radicalism in this sense is anarchic and individualistic, designed to bring about "a free, classless, warless, humanly satisfying society," in which everyone is assured "complete and immediate satisfaction in his work, his leisure, his sex life, and all other aspects of his nature," and all men are able to "satisfy their spontaneous needs here and now."

Macdonald's essay (appearing in two parts in *Politics* and later reprinted as a book) was sharply criticized by those radicals who wanted to retain Marxism while rejecting Stalinism, and by others who thought that his vision of man was utopian and hedonistic. But still others, disillusioned with both Marxism and Stalinism, were enticed by this "new politics" that promised sexual as well as all other forms of liberation and that professed to be moral rather than materialistic. Macdonald himself, seeking sexual fulfillment in a passionate but finally unsatisfactory love affair, was attracted to the writings of Paul Goodman and Wilhelm Reich, the gurus of sexual liberation, for whom sexual repression was a form of social oppression. The appearance of these writers in *Politics* added a fillip to the anarchism and pacifism, the anti-Americanism and anti-Stalinism, that defined the journal in the years following the war.

On a more conventional political level, Macdonald found it difficult to sustain the conjunction of anti-Stalinism and anti-Americanism, as he protested the West's "appeasement" of the Soviet Union at Yalta, approved of the airlift to protect Berlin, and at the same time castigated the U.S. Army as "a most reactionary organization, whose purpose is mass slaughter." In May 1949, testifying to his inability to resolve this con-

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tradiction, he gave an address entitled "Goodbye to Utopia." It might more properly have been called "Goodbye to Politics"—to *Politics* as well as to politics, for a few months later he announced the suspension of the journal.

THE 1950's saw the emergence of a Macdonald intent on personal liberation. Having earlier identified "the root is man" with "selfishness" as a positive good, he was now pleased to inform his wife, after a session with his psychoanalyst, "I'm becoming more selfish by the minute." To a friend, relating his current affair (which was soon to lead to his divorce and remarriage), he boasted: "The only responsibilities, duties, obligations I will accept are those I want to, those I choose to, freely and spontaneously." His professional career also took a new turn as he entered the world of the freelance writer, becoming a regular contributor to the *New Yorker* and, later, to *Esquire*.

Yet he did not entirely renounce politics. Reviewing Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), he commended her view of totalitarianism as the extreme expression of a rotting bourgeois society. Totalitarian man, he quoted Arendt, was one's next-door neighbor, a stolid "bourgeois family man." Yet Macdonald was also much troubled by those liberals, like Roger Baldwin of the American Civil Liberties Union, who were guilty, he said, of a double standard, accusing the United States of violating civil liberties while condoning the total absence of civil liberties in the Soviet Union.

For a brief while, in reaction against Baldwin and his like, Macdonald found himself defending America against its detractors. But he soon reverted to the theme that dominated most of his essays in this period: the corruption of popular culture and mass society brought about by capitalism. This, rather than Communism, now seemed to him to be the most urgent threat to civilization, and it inspired his most brilliant and caustic articles.*

It was in the *New Yorker* that he made his name as the scourge of popular culture, thrashing Mortimer Adler's edition of the Great Books (published by the Encyclopedia Britannica), the revised version of the Bible, the third edition of Webster's Dictionary, and the Ford Foundation. (The memorable opening sentence of the last essay read: "The Ford Foundation is a large body of money completely surrounded by people who want some.") The essays were scintillating and utterly devastating. Yet there was something anomalous about their appearance in the *New Yorker*, the purveyor *par excellence* of popular culture, amid advertisements for the most lavish products of capitalist enterprise. (While Macdonald always defended the *New Yorker*, at least after he became associated with it, he was merciless toward *Life* magazine, wickedly delighting in the juxtaposition of an advertisement featuring a well-dressed American family with a photograph of a ragged Bolivian peon.)

There was also an ambiguous note in some of the essays. The most telling points in his indictment of Adler's Great Books were his criticism of the *Syntopicon* (the index of ideas) as an attempt to be precise about ideas that could not be precisely defined or categorized; his charge that some of the selections (not only the scientific works but much of Aristotle and Aquinas) were "impenetrable to the lay reader"; and his argument that most of the books were already in print and more fun to buy in separate editions. But there was also an animus against the enterprise as such: a commercial venture designed for a mass market, a "typical expression of the American advertising psyche." Macdonald was often accused of intellectual snobbery in his condemnation of popular culture, but he was also something of a social snob in his contempt for those who tried to bring high culture to the masses, and for the masses who thought they could buy culture in the vulgar form of a set of great books.

By the early 1960's, Macdonald had become a leading light in the intellectual establishment, much in demand as a writer, lecturer, itinerant professor, and radio and television commentator. He also enjoyed an active social life. Charming in his inimitable fashion, with a beguiling innocence and self-deprecatory manner that captivated even those who disagreed with him, he was a familiar and welcome presence at cocktail and dinner parties. It was all very gratifying—and surprisingly remunerative. "I tell you, Nick," he wrote to his good friend Nicola Chiaromonte, "we intellectuals have struck Gold." While he was attacking "Masscult and Midcult" (mass culture and middlebrow culture) in *Partisan Review*, he was also indulging his own passion for movies by becoming a film critic for *Esquire* and a regular commentator on movies on the *Today* show.

What he rarely did, however, was to write about the high culture he valued so highly. Here, too, Macdonald was a naysayer and dissenter, lavishing his superb polemical skills on destroying a popular (and now little-remembered) best-selling novel by James Gould Cozzens rather than undertaking the kind of sustained critical analysis of a Dostoevsky or a Henry James that his friends were writing for *Partisan Review*.

THE 1960's saw the emergence of yet another phase in the evolution of the great dissenter—dissenting now not only from bourgeois and mass society but from the old radicalism as well. When the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was formed in 1960,

* It was also in this period that he became involved in *Encounter* magazine published in London, an episode I shall not discuss because of my personal involvement in it; in any case it adds nothing new to the portrait of Macdonald.

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Macdonald was a featured speaker at its first convention, extolling the virtues of anarchism. He soon became a hero of the New Left, joining Herbert Marcuse, Angela Davis, Howard Fast, and other erstwhile enemies (some still unregenerate Stalinists) in denouncing America as "the most feared and hated nation in the world."

To the distress of some of his friends in the Old Left, Macdonald embraced not only the politics of the New Left—mainly, opposition to the Vietnam war—but also its "counterculture" (while continuing to preach against popular culture). He became a great friend of the "Yippie" Abbie Hoffman, approved of the "Make love, not war" slogan, explained that he was "all for utopia, an experiment noble in purpose," joined in protest marches and demonstrations (including one in support of the Black Panthers at Yale), and happily reported to a friend that he was once again "getting all mixed up in dissenting politics."

He also enthusiastically adopted the confrontational techniques of the new dissenters. Unlike the poet Robert Lowell who, in protest against Vietnam, refused to attend a White House Festival of the Arts in 1965, Macdonald accepted the invitation and used the occasion to solicit signatures for a statement condemning the war and the Johnson administration. He appeared in the Rose Garden ceremony sweating and disheveled, wearing a plaid shirt and tennis shoes, his shirt and underwear, according to some witnesses, having come untucked from his trousers, exposing his "round pink belly."

Three years later, when the Columbia University "rebellion" started, his friend Fred Dupee, of Columbia's English department, told him, "You must come up right away, Dwight. It's a revolution! You may never get another chance to see one." Arriving at the campus, Macdonald was given the celebrity tour of the occupied buildings. Undisturbed by what others described as wanton destruction, filth, and obscenity, he praised the spirit of "participatory democracy" and the atmosphere of "exhilaration, excitement—pleasant, friendly, almost joyous excitement." When the critic Diana Trilling indignantly complained that the students had been peeing out of the president's windows, Macdonald replied: "If anybody's windows can be peed out of, it's his windows. He was a big stuffed shirt and of course they got rid of him, thank God." Later he eulogized the student rebels: "They're the best generation I have known in this country, the cleverest and the most serious and decent."

Just as Dupee called upon him to witness the great "revolution" of their time, so Macdonald, after the White House affair, had telephoned Mary McCarthy, then on a wedding trip to Paris, urging her to return home, for it was "becoming just like the 30's." In fact, the 60's were not like the 30's, when disputation, however misguided, was intellectually serious and sober, and when peeing out of windows was not taken as the ultimate revolutionary act. But for Macdonald, himself turning sixty, the ferment and fervor of that decade were a rejuvenating experience. His rhetoric became as heated as that of the most callow SDS-er: America was the successor to "Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia as a disturber of the peace"; the United States was "the main center of violence in the world today"; President Lyndon Johnson should be impeached because he had a "vigorous and terrifying will, like Hitler and Stalin." When the poet Delmore Schwartz died, after a lifetime of alcoholism, drug abuse, and psychosis, Macdonald declared him a victim of American society: "Poetry is a dangerous occupation in this country."

The 70's were a sad let-down after the frenetic 60's. Macdonald continued to be a peripatetic professor, but a still younger generation did not give him the recognition he savored, and the older generation was increasingly impatient with him. Always a heavy drinker, he became an alcoholic, and as his physical condition deteriorated (his alcoholism aggravated by the use of barbiturates), his behavior became more erratic and irascible.

The great disappointment of Macdonald's last years was his writing. It was, finally, as a writer, not as an activist, that he saw himself, and he wrote very little in the decade before his death (in December 1982 at the age of seventy-six). In a sense, he had always been something of a "blocked writer." Although he was a most felicitous stylist, witty, acerbic, a brilliant phrase-monger and title-inventor, writing had never come easily to him. (He once told me that he wrote disconnected paragraphs, piecing them together when he was finished.) He never wrote "a book in cold blood," as he put it—one that was not a collection of essays or an expansion of an essay. Now he was incapable of writing anything more ambitious than a movie review.

A MORE unhappy aspect of Macdonald's life was his attitude to Jews and Jewish affairs, which issued in repeated charges against him of anti-Semitism. This theme runs like a festering sore throughout Michael Wreszin's book. It first appears in the mindless jibes of the Waspish Exeter schoolboy and Yale undergraduate, then in the natural defensiveness of a non-Jew confronted with a group of aggressive, arrogant Jewish intellectuals.

But it was the war that strained his relations with some of his friends. From his "plague-on-both-houses" stance, he looked with suspicion on reports of Nazi atrocities. The first oblique reference in *Politics* to the "contemporary horrors" appeared in the unlikely context of a discussion of Herman Melville's *Redburn*, with Macdonald reminding his readers that "official murder" was not started by the Nazis: "A century ago equally

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revolting and widespread atrocities were inflicted on millions of beings in peacetime by British capitalism."

This equation of the Holocaust with the "atrocities" of capitalism was made in the spring of 1944, a good year-and-a-half after news of the Holocaust had been reliably reported in America. Not until later that year, with the appearance in *Politics* of an article on the concentration camps by the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, who was himself a survivor of the camps, did Macdonald begin to take the Holocaust seriously. Even then he insisted that it was not a unique event but only further evidence of the dehumanizing effects of the bureaucratic nation-state, of mass society, and of modern war. Nor were the German people responsible for it; indeed, the lynching of blacks in the South was indicative of more widespread racism than the murder of Jews by the Nazis. After the war, more than ever intent upon absolving the German people of responsibility, Macdonald suggested that reports coming out of the death camps were sensationalized, that the raping and pillaging by Soviet soldiers resembled the behavior of the SS and Gestapo, and that Stalinism was a greater danger than Nazism had been.

On a variety of other subjects, Macdonald expressed himself in a manner that was disquieting to many of his friends. He was hardly alone in opposing the creation of a Jewish state; Hannah Arendt, for one, shared this view. But he was more intemperate than most in attributing all Zionist talk to "fascist-revisionist Jews," and he remained implacably hostile to Israel after its founding and consistently partial to the Palestinians. He was also intolerant of any discussion of Judaism—not only of Zionism but of Jewish religion, tradition, and community. Jewish culture, he said, was provincial and second-rate, rather like his own Scottish culture, and those intellectuals (including his friends) who were writing about it were reverting to the "primitive clannishness" of a "ghetto culture." If COMMENTARY continued to publish such articles, he predicted, it would lose its intellectual credibility.

The Jewish issue surfaced again and again: when he denied that the French 19th-century socialist Proudhon, who portrayed the Jew as the archetypical international-finance capitalist, was anti-Semitic; or when he supported the award of the Bollingen Prize for poetry to Ezra Pound, who was virulently fascistic and anti-Semitic; or when he criticized Hollywood films about the Bible for making the Romans, instead of the Jews, the "fall goys" [*sic*] for the crucifixion of Jesus, intimating that this was done by Jewish producers for commercial reasons (because there were more Jews than Romans to pay to see the films); or when he defended Hannah Arendt's 1963 book on Adolf Eichmann, in which the Nazi war criminal was portrayed as "banal" and Jewish leaders were said to have conspired in the tragedy of their people, and dismissed her critics as Jewish "nationalists" (or, if they were not Jewish, as "Honorary Semites"); or when, in New York's public-school controversy in 1968, he supported the black school board in Ocean Hill-Brownsville against the teachers' union, ignoring (as does his biographer) the anti-Semitic statements made by partisans of the board, instead baselessly accusing the union of circulating "racist filth"; or after the Six-Day War of 1967, when he denounced Israel's treatment of Arab refugees as "disgraceful and disgusting" (having never criticized the Arab treatment of Jews), and dared his "anti-anti-Semitic friends" to make what they would of this, defiantly pronouncing himself "once more an anti-anti-anti-Semite." And then there were the occasions when he was drunk and made crude anti-Semitic remarks, as at a party in London when, according to his biographer, he "loudly and repeatedly laughed off Auschwitz" in the presence of a woman whose concentration-camp number was tattooed on her forearm.

One does not want to exaggerate the import of any one or even several of these episodes. Anti-Zionism is not tantamount to anti-Semitism, and neither is Arendt's thesis about Eichmann. Nor should one forget Macdonald's genuine horror at the Holocaust, once he was convinced it was true (and when he was sober); or his indignation when the American authorities were laggard in helping the victims of Nazism; or his denunciation of a black radical organization when it issued a blatantly anti-Semitic statement. Yet all of those other occasions, over the course of all those years, add up to a pattern, as he himself put it, of anti-anti-anti-Semitism. If even his sympathetic biographer confesses, at one point, to being "unsettled" by the evidence,* the reader of the biography may find it still more disturbing.

MORE unsettling still is the kind of radical politics, the politics of dissent, that reveals itself in every stage of Macdonald's career. Delmore Schwartz once said of him: "Yes, antagonism for its own sake is his appetite and neurosis, and none of his political predictions come true, but he is a master of expository prose." It is unfortunate that in this biography we have so few sustained examples of his prose, which was indeed brilliant, and all too many examples of his failed predictions. But mainly what we have is his proclivity for "antagonism for its own sake"—the "dissidence of dissent," as Matthew Arnold put it.

* This admission appears in an endnote at the back of the book. More often, Wreszin accepts Macdonald's claim that Jews were being overly "sensitive" and that Macdonald was defending himself against a code of "political correctness." Wreszin himself repeatedly characterizes Macdonald's critics as "second-generation Jews," "upwardly mobile intellectuals with immigrant backgrounds," so insecure as to feel obliged to defend America and Israel rather than join Macdonald in his position of principled dissent against both.

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It is this quality that makes Macdonald a hero to his biographer and to those radicals for whom dissent is the token of a principled politics, a purity of mind and elevation of soul that refuse to be contaminated by mundane reality. "Dwight still had his purity intact, if no really viable politics," Wreszin says of him in the aftermath of World War II, when he found no presidential candidate (including the socialist Norman Thomas) worthy of his vote.

Wreszin finds this an endearing trait—indeed, he sees it as the legacy of Macdonald to the present generation, who may be inspired by his ability "to keep an independent critical intellect alive in a time of strident political and cultural orthodoxy." The reader, however, recalling Macdonald's role in the 60's when he was comfortably ensconced in the orthodoxy of the New Left, may be reminded instead of that wonderful quip by Harold Rosenberg, "the herd of independent minds." The politics of dissent, it has become all too evident, creates its own strident orthodoxy, in which the "independent critical intellect" tends to lose not only its independence but also its purity and its viability. "When you start looking for purity in politics," Mario Vargas Llosa says of the Trotskyist hero of one of his novels, "you eventually get to unreality."

ALTHOUGH this biography furnishes a good deal of the raw material upon which the reader may make his own judgment of Macdonald, his spirit is better captured in the memoirs, fictional and nonfictional, of his friends—conveyed, moreover, with the panache of Macdonald himself. Thus, Mary McCarthy's "Portrait of the Intellectual as a Yale Man," written in 1942, gives us a barely fictionalized young Macdonald who presages the Macdonald of later years: "His mind and character appeared to him as a kind of sacred trust that he must preserve inviolate. It was as if he were the standard gold dollar against which the currency is measured."

Another fictional Macdonald appears in Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), in the character of Huggins, "a famous bohemian dissenter and revolutionist" in his youth who remained, in spite of the ravages of age, "the Harvard radical of the John Reed type, one of those ever-youthful lightweight high-spirited American intellectuals . . . [who] could no more give up his delightful ideological capital than the bonds he had inherited from his father."*

And then there is William Barrett's nonfictional portrait in *The Truants* (1982), one of the best memoirs of this period, which Wreszin does not quote. This is Macdonald in the late 40's and early 50's—but it too applies as much to the later Macdonald:

> Macdonald desired above all that his politics be pure and avant-garde, detached from any vulgar alignments of power. . . . For him every venture into politics was a leap toward the Absolute. . . . He was a kind of Don Quixote or Galahad, alternately tilting at windmills or in quest of the Holy Grail. Politics for him, I think, was really a groping for salvation of some kind.

Explaining the title of his book, Wreszin places his hero in "the tradition of the rebel who resists and says no to the intolerable absurdities of life, and by doing so makes an affirmative statement," an "implicit assertion of values." But consider the "intolerable absurdities" that Macdonald resisted: the war against Nazism, which was not only the greater evil but one of the most monstrous evils of modern times; or the creation of the state of Israel in the aftermath of the Holocaust; or the middlebrow culture of America, while embracing the counterculture of the New Left. And consider the kind of "affirmative statement" or "values" that emerged from this indomitable spirit of resistance: that bourgeois society is as degrading and dehumanizing as Soviet totalitarianism; or that the millennia-old Jewish culture is as provincial as Scottish culture; or that anarchism is the only alternative to capitalist politics, indeed the only moral position for the true intellectual.

If this biography teaches us anything, it is that there is no greater vanity or folly—or peril—than a moral posturing that passes for politics, or a politics of dissent that makes a virtue of dissent for its own sake.

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* A still more memorable vignette by Bellow is of Huggins at a beach party, sitting naked at one end of a log, discussing the McCarthy hearings with a lady sitting naked opposite him. "Huggins was speaking with a cigarette holder in his teeth, and his penis, which lay before him on the water-smooth wood, expressed all the fluctuations of his interest. And while he was puffing and giving his views in a neighing stammer, his genital went back and forth like the slide of a trombone." Recalling this scene, the narrator comments, "You could never feel unfriendly toward a man of whom you kept such a memory."

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Matthew Arnold and Us

John Gross

A HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE years after it was first published, a new edition of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*—the classic defense of high culture against the depredations of modernity—is still an event.* This is a work that speaks to us directly, even intimately; a work that still sets a challenge. And yet a reader coming to *Culture and Anarchy* for the first time, knowing nothing of it but its reputation, could soon find himself wondering whether this is the same book as the one he has heard so much about.

Samuel Lipman's admirable edition is reinforced by a commentary consisting of four newly commissioned essays—by Lipman himself, by the American literary critics Gerald Graff and Steven Marcus, and by the British historian Maurice Cowling. The first three discuss the ways in which *Culture and Anarchy* is relevant to the needs and problems of our own time; the fourth, although it questions that relevance, recognizes that most of Matthew Arnold's modern admirers (and many of his opponents) think otherwise. But Lipman—who in his "other" life is COMMENTARY's music critic and the publisher of the *New Criterion*—has also provided twenty pages of badly-needed notes, explaining names and other allusions; and merely to glance at them is to be reminded how deeply rooted *Culture and Anarchy* is in a particular time and place, and a particular set of social developments.

WHEN *Culture and Anarchy* first appeared in book form in 1869, Matthew Arnold was forty-six. He was best known as a poet—the most gifted of the generation immediately following Tennyson and Browning, the author of such renowned anthology pieces as "The Scholar Gipsy" and "Dover Beach." But by this time his poetic career was largely behind him, and he was to write very little further verse of much consequence. He had, however, acquired a formidable second reputation as a critic, based chiefly on the lectures he had delivered as professor of poetry at Oxford from 1857 to 1867, and more particularly on the selection of them published as *Essays in Criticism (First Series)* in 1865.

In their breadth, lucidity, and high standards, these essays marked Arnold as the most important English critic since William Hazlitt or even Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In the best of them—above all in the one entitled "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"—he also ventured well beyond literary criticism proper into the region which a later generation would have called cultural criticism. He discussed the prevailing values of his society—its tone and its unthinking assumptions no less than its formal beliefs; and he was especially scathing about its philistinism (a term imported from Germany, which he was the first to put into widespread circulation) and its self-complacency.

His criticisms did not go unanswered. Almost at once there were counterblasts in the press, some of them (as he conceded) from intellectually reputable quarters. Arnold replied to his critics in turn, and extended his attack in a series of satirical newspaper articles, later published in book form under the title *Friendship's Garland.* Although he was a peaceable man by temperament, he increasingly found himself assuming the role of popular controversialist.

It was from this background that *Culture and Anarchy* emerged. In 1867 he published the first chapter—it was also his concluding lecture as professor of poetry—in a widely-read periodical, the *Cornhill Magazine.* In a series of five subsequent interlinked articles, he broadened the argument of "The Function of Criticism" into a wholesale assessment of what the Victorians themselves called the "Condition of England." His analysis encompassed the still-powerful aristocracy ("the Barbarians") and the working class ("the Populace"), which was just beginning to show its political muscle; but most of his attentions—and his fire—were reserved for the middle class, whom he identified squarely as "the Philistines." At a time when most middle-class Englishmen still gloried in the unprecedented triumphs of industrialism (this was the period that had

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been ushered in by the Great Exhibition of 1851), he chose instead to dwell on the discontents and imperfections of his society—moral, social, spiritual, aesthetic. The indictment was a lengthy one; the chief remedy, as he saw it, was education.

There was nothing vague or merely pious about Arnold's placing his hopes in this direction. Few Englishmen of his time knew more about the practical workings (and shortcomings) of the educational system. He had inherited his interest from his father, Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School and architect of the modern British public (i.e., private) school system—a legendary figure celebrated at the popular level in the novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and later to be caricatured by Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians*. From 1851, Matthew Arnold himself had worked as a government inspector of schools, and his involvement in day-to-day educational politics runs through the articles that make up *Culture and Anarchy*. So do many other immediate political issues, especially the controversies then raging about parliamentary reform and the extension of the suffrage.

It is not only American readers in the 1990's who need to have Arnold's references to public events and personalities explained. Many of his allusions would have been unintelligible to most British readers within a few years of the time he was writing; in the later editions that he prepared, they were largely excised. But it is the text of the first edition that Lipman uses here—and rightly so, since without the topicalities the book loses a good deal of force and flavor. It had begun life as a series of articles, and its semi-journalistic qualities—its immediacy and informality—constitute a large part of its appeal.

This gives rise to a persistent paradox. In the course of the book Arnold lays heavy stress on permanent and universal values; his opponents stand condemned, as much as anything else, by reason of their provincialism. But in practice he remains closely enmeshed with the local and the comparatively ephemeral; and this is true not only of the illustrations which he uses to drive home his arguments but also, to a considerable degree, of the arguments themselves. He wrote as a member of the Church of England, or at any rate from a broadly Anglican standpoint, and the quarrel between Anglicanism and English Nonconformity is part of the book's innermost substance—a quarrel presented, moreover, not so much in terms of first principles but as it affected current questions of social policy and legislation.

Maurice Cowling, in his contribution to this new edition, offers a persuasive account of *Culture and Anarchy* as one stage in Arnold's attempt to preserve the values of his youth in a changing world (an important aspect of the change being that those values had originally rested on religious beliefs to which he himself could no longer give wholehearted assent). Cowling's conclusion is that Arnold's message is too bound up with his circumstances to be translated into 20th-century terms, any more than his political and cultural opinions can really be detached from his religious ones. And if that makes Arnold seem a remote figure, then we had better accept that in many ways he *is* a remote figure, and not one who can be looked to for much practical guidance.

And yet we can hardly leave matters at that. From the first, readers have reserved the right to distill their own message from *Culture and Anarchy*, to detach what they value most about it from its religious concerns in exactly the manner that Cowling warns against. Even to his contemporaries, Arnold was above all what he remains today: the apostle of culture.

Culture does not always mean the same thing in his writing, but it always figures as a positive good. He defined it, in his most famous formulation, as an acquaintance with "the best which has been thought and said in the world." He variously identified it with the humanizing and the inward absorption of that knowledge (as opposed to the mere acquisition of facts); with the development of a balanced personality; and with individual progress toward what he did not hesitate to characterize as "perfection." (This was an unmistakable echo of the Gospels—"be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect"; secular-minded readers might prefer to substitute a less demanding term.) He also maintained, notoriously, that one of the prime benefits of culture was "sweetness and light"—a condition which included among its attributes flexibility, urbanity, an even temper, a willingness to reconsider fixed positions.

There is a great deal here to take issue with, but ultimately that may not matter very much. Henry James praised *Culture and Anarchy* for its "luminosity," and he chose his word well—luminosity rather than clarity. Arnold was wise enough to keep his arguments fairly loose and his terms fairly vague: "sweetness and light," for example, is simply repeated like a mantra. Whatever the drawbacks to such a procedure, the advantage is that Arnold's ideas, as children's-clothes salesmen used to say, "allow for growth." We can see in a general way what he means by culture, and why he sets such a high value on it. We are not obliged to accept his prescriptions in detail, and we are free to adapt them to altered circumstances.

It is important in this connection to remember that Arnold was a liberal. He believed in progress, however warily. He would have found many of our domestic attitudes and social arrangements more humane than those of his own time, and on the whole, I think, he would have applauded. He

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would also have recognized that, under its contemporary gloss, a good deal of today's tawdriness is merely an updated version of the tawdriness of the past. Confronted with this or that media personality or best-selling author, an Arnold returned to earth might well murmur, "Ah, yes, I knew his grandfather."

But some things today would undoubtedly shock him, as they must shock even the most adaptable Arnoldian. The modern world simply seems more given over to anarchy—more irredeemably anarchic—than anything Arnold could have imagined, and nowhere more so than in the realm of culture itself, and particularly in the scene of devastation presented by so much intellectual and academic life. Yet it seems to have been in the hope that a fresh encounter with Arnold might help even today that Samuel Lipman undertook this new edition.

IN ONE of the most heartfelt passages in *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold praises "men of culture" as "the true apostles of equality":

> The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have labored to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the best knowledge and thought of the time. . . .

The great men of culture, in other words, believe in the common reader. The great men and women of the present-day Modern Language Association, on the other hand, appear not to. Arnold chose his words with care and, when it came to including "professional" in his list of undesirable qualities, with some courage. Not that he failed to esteem professional scholarship when it was practiced in the right place and for the right purpose. It was misapplied or second-rate professionalism that was the threat, and a threat he took seriously—though he could hardly have foreseen quite how harsh and uncouth the supposed disseminators of culture would become in the era of structuralism and critical theory, or quite how much they would glory in being abstract and exclusive.

Whatever virtues they may or may not possess, today's literary theoreticians are choking the channels through which a knowledge of culture and a love of culture are transmitted from one generation to the next. And they represent only one of the forces against which culture in the traditional sense now has to contend. In his essay here, Lipman surveys a score of others, from the brutalities of current popular entertainment (or a large slice of it) to the divisiveness of multiculturalism. The picture he paints confirms one of the saddest truths of a world increasingly dominated by low culture and pop culture and who-knows-what culture—that the greater the need for educational and artistic institutions to serve as bastions of high culture, the more they have tended to subvert high culture themselves. The worst enemies are now within the gate.

Lipman still subscribes to the Arnoldian ideal. So, with somewhat different emphases, does Steven Marcus, who has long taught at Columbia. He, too, has a gloomy tale to tell. We live in a social and cultural world, he reports, which is unmoored, fragmented, "driven in the main by the politics of identity, group thought, and the hegemony of representativeness." What is even worse, one of the major presuppositions of today's culture is "that there are no plausible, convincing, or intersubjective standards to which anyone can appeal in the effort to establish judgments of quality." So much for the best which has been thought and said.

By comparison, Gerald Graff, who teaches English at Northwestern, takes a sanguine view of the situation. "Having written a culture-and-anarchy book myself," he tells us (as who should say, "I once wrote a war-and-peace novel"), "I think I know from the inside what it feels like to be convinced that the destruction of reason and culture is at hand." But on closer inspection, Graff continues, he decided that the particular object of his attack—current literary theory—had a lot to be said for it, and he now feels that the conditions which increasingly prevail in today's classrooms are the appropriate ones "if we are sincere about creating a common culture under democratic conditions."

Matthew Arnold occupies a bad eminence in Graff's scheme of things because he set such a powerful precedent. Following his example, generations of teachers, acting in the name of supposedly absolute values, inculcated the tastes and preferences of dominant social groups. But now other groups are at long last claiming the right to have a say in how culture is defined. What Graff chiefly has in mind is the advent of "new social movements based on gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation"; but there seem no good grounds for withholding the same democratic rights from any interest group that is sufficiently energetic and well-organized. And how is a consensus going to emerge from this ferment of opinion? It is not, since in a democratic society, says Graff, a common culture means "a common *debate* over culture." Not a discussion, a term we might all be willing to accept, but a debate—an unending debate, with a perpetual clash of views.

IT IS amusing, in a grim way, to try to picture what would happen if such an idea were taken literally. Every college year would

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have to begin with the reinventing of the wheel (though it would not necessarily be the same wheel each time). Every decision about what to teach and how to teach it would have to be put to the vote, every vote would be subject to constant amendment. Can Graff really mean what he is saying? Even in principle, there is surely something about the whole atmosphere of a debate that is inimical to most of the qualities that make literature what it is, that distinguish it from journalism. As William Blake wrote:

> Great things are done when men and
> mountains meet.
> This is not done by jostling in the street.

In practice, it seems almost inevitable that the works being studied would be drowned out by the opinions being expressed about them, and by the opinions being expressed about those opinions. Some of us might end up dying of boredom.

All this is largely beside the point, however, since as an account of current campus circumstances, Graff's "debate" is a euphemism. The situation much more closely resembles a power struggle, in which ground is gained through belligerence and intimidation, and yielded through guilt, embarrassment, and the desire for a quiet life. Graff himself momentarily gives the game away with an unlovely phrase. The desired debate over culture, he writes, is one "in which the community's identity and purposes are taken to be always up for grabs."

Up for grabs! That may or may not be an accurate way to describe the struggle for influence and resources in the broader political world. But one thing is certain: literature that is grabbed ceases to be literature. It becomes a trophy or a piece of ammunition; it is reduced to publicity for your own cause, or further evidence of how reprehensible your opponents are.

GRAFF's criticisms of *Culture and Anarchy* itself are rather more telling than his general reasoning, and most admirers of Arnold would agree with at least some of them. He has little trouble, for instance, in showing that Arnold's ideas are often more socially conditioned than they initially appear, or that he has a trick of invoking "right reason" where he really means custom and tradition.

But I can only repeat: thanks to the spirit in which he wrote, most readers have never felt hemmed in by Arnold's particular prescriptions. For one thing, his doctrine of culture carries its own antidote against any assumption of infallibility. That doctrine "will not let us rivet our faith on any one man and his doings," he wrote. "It makes us see, not only his good side, but how much of him was of necessity limited and transient; nay, it even feels a pleasure, a sense of an increased freedom and of an ampler future, in so doing." And the predominant tendency of Arnold's writing was to encourage his readers to look outward, beyond themselves. There was nothing irrevocably classbound or ethnocentric, certainly not by mid-Victorian standards, about a critic who could write so warmly about Heine or Spinoza, or who could publish—a year or two after *Culture and Anarchy*—an appreciation of a Muslim passion play (written from a Christian point of view, inevitably, but with a good deal of sympathy and respect).*

No one could doubt that Arnold was deeply discontented with many aspects of his own society. My own view is that he was often unfair: Victorian culture was richer and stronger, Victorian achievements were more impressive, than one would conclude if all one had to go on was *Culture and Anarchy*. Still, he could not fight on every front at once. He recognized evils about which most of his contemporaries were complacent, and it should never be forgotten how many of them he had observed at close quarters through his work as a school inspector in poor industrial regions. He also recognized ugliness and meanness of spirit, and he felt impelled to speak up against them. He recognized ponderous self-satisfaction, and he was determined to show it up for the absurdity it was.

Gerald Graff, like many previous commentators, places Arnold in the line of critics of modernity stretching back to Wordsworth and Carlyle and forward to writers like W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, and D.H. Lawrence. Clearly he has something in common with such figures—the sense of increased social rootlessness and of the debased

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* Graff cites Frederic E. Faverty's *Matthew Arnold the Ethnologist*—he calls it "a devastating book"—as demonstrating that Arnold "subscribed to some of the more unsavory versions of national racial dispositions that many Victorians entertained." The reality seems to me less sinister than this makes it sound. It is true that, like most of his contemporaries, Arnold indulged in large racial generalizations—in his case, chiefly about the supposed differences between Teutons and Celts; but personally I would characterize the evidence collected in Faverty's book as mildly disturbing rather than devastating. Anyone who takes the trouble to look it up will see that in comparison with the true precursors of modern racism, Arnold's views were fairly innocuous.

One of the key distinctions that *Culture and Anarchy* draws is between "Hellenism" (which Arnold defined as "spontaneity of consciousness") and "Hebraism" (or "strictness of conscience"), with the clear implication that Victorian England had too little of the former and too much of the latter. Some critics have seen in this evidence of anti-Semitism, but I cannot agree with them. The distinction between the symbolic "Hebrew" and "Hellene" (which Arnold borrowed from the Jewish-born German poet Heinrich Heine) was meant to be one of attitude or belief rather than race; and Arnold valued Hebraism, which in some moods he virtually identified with morality, at least as highly as Hellenism, if not more highly. His point was that neither force was enough in itself: each needed to be supplemented by the other.

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quality of life. But to set him alongside them is also to become aware of differences, above all of how moderate he seems in comparison.

ARNOLD once wrote that Carlyle, in his role of angry political prophet, had ended up as "a moral desperado." He understood the temptation himself, and he resisted it—resisted it more successfully than Eliot or Yeats or Lawrence would do. Indeed, one of his attractions today is that he shows that it is possible to feel a romantic revulsion from modern society without turning into a reactionary.

Nor was he in much danger of succumbing to the other great temptation that was to beset 20th-century intellectuals. "Culture," he wrote, "is the eternal opponent of the two things which are the signal marks of Jacobinism—its fierceness, and its addiction to an abstract system." We know what he thought of Auguste Comte, the founder of the doctrinaire philosophy of Positivism; we can deduce what he would have thought of Marx.

In the end, for all his jibes at "our liberal practitioners," *Culture and Anarchy* is one of the great monuments of Victorian liberalism. Readers hoping for a sulfurous diatribe should be warned that it is a very witty book, and a rather worldly one. It is also, as Steven Marcus justly says, an optimistic book—"hopeful, cheerful, good-humored, patient with its adversaries and its adverse times." The optimism was fundamental: without it, the wit would have jarred and the good humor would have seemed out of place. But Arnold was also witty and good-humored as a matter of principle. "Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must all be," he wrote in his essay on Heine, "all of us who have any power of working; what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents."

But where does that leave us today, when every fool knows how to be a dissolvent, and being acrid often seems the only way of obtaining a hearing? Marcus asks us to go on pinning our faith on education; but by his own showing, colleges are now doing as much to destroy culture as to uphold it. Samuel Lipman believes that Arnold's chief value to us today is as "a lonely spokesman for an inward culture"; but to accept that would be to abandon the key Arnoldian conviction that culture has "one passion" even greater than sweetness and light—"the passion for making them *prevail*." None of us has the answer; we can only do our best to resist anarchy, each in our own line, and hope that better days will come.

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Family Reunion

Walter Laqueur

On March 19, 1994, a Jewish family reunion took place in Givat Haim, a kibbutz situated midway between Tel Aviv and Haifa. Such meetings are hardly unique among Jews these days—a few weeks earlier, 85 members of the Rothschild family, all descendants of Mayer Amshel (1743-1812), had assembled in Frankfurt—but neither are they all that frequent.

The reason is not far to seek. The major migrations in modern Jewish history have left few genealogical records to be traced, and the catastrophe that befell European Jewry in this century destroyed virtually all that remained. Although the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv regularly receives communications from individuals attempting to document that they are the direct descendants of King David, close inspection invariably reveals one or more missing links. In other cases, the family name is so common that research is virtually impossible. (There are about a hundred Rothschilds, not to mention Epsteins and Shapiros, in the Tel Aviv telephone directory alone.) Few Ashkenazi families can trace their origins back further than two or three generations with any precision.

Nevertheless, 105 Laqueurs from over a dozen countries, largely unknown to one another, came together on a Sabbath afternoon in Givat Haim. What they shared in common was documentary evidence that they were progeny of a man named Eliezer who lived in the Silesian village of Staedtel around the beginning of the 18th century.

The idea for this particular reunion first occurred to two women members of Givat Haim about a year before we assembled, and most of the preparatory work was done by younger members of the clan. Obviously, it proved impossible to locate all the world's Laqueurs. On account of marriage—the blessing and bane of genealogists—women had taken new surnames, and certain branches of the family had not been Jewish for generations or had vanished from purview altogether. Nevertheless, having sent out chain letters, the organizers succeeded in finding a surprisingly large number of descendants of Eliezer and of his three sons, David, Joseph, and Moritz.

Laqueurs ranging in age from four months to ninety-four years turned up at Givat Haim. They came from Israel, where a quarter or perhaps a third of them now live, from all sorts of nooks and crannies across Europe, and from as far afield as Chile and even an Indian reservation in New Mexico. I did not see any physical similarities among those present that afternoon, but others claimed to have discerned a variety of common traits. Although no formal social survey was undertaken, among the roughly equal number of men and women in attendance were at least a dozen kibbutzniks, a half-dozen physicists, another half-dozen computer scientists, about the same number of doctors and nurses, several professional Israeli army officers, three university professors, two photographers, a banker, a young unemployed Dutchman, a collection of housewives and pensioners, and—just in case we had needed a Christian benediction—one Protestant clergyman.

What is the history of this remarkable group of people? In the months leading up to the reunion, much effort was expended in searching for the family's origins, and an astonishingly large quantity of material was uncovered, including old letters, archival records, and published and unpublished autobiographical sketches. In the end, the clan's origins remained obscure, but we certainly reached a higher and more satisfying degree of ignorance.

Eliezer Alexander, the first Laqueur, is thought to have come to Silesia from Winzenheim, today a suburb of Colmar in Alsace, at the invitation of the dukes of Württemberg, who had large holdings both in Alsace and Silesia and were looking for competent managers to help develop their land in the East. Rabbi David of Staedtel (1770-1846), one of Eliezer's three sons, seems to have served as the family's advance man for this relocation. The Duke was an intellectual of sorts who wrote books and operas and felt bored in the Silesian wilderness. David, a first-rate chess player, hence became a frequent guest in the castle at Carlsruhe near Staedtel. As recently as 1925, a visitor to the castle was shown the cupboard in which the kosher dishes used by Rabbi David were kept.

There is, however, no certainty that this version of events is authentic. On repeated visits to Winzenheim, I have failed to uncover any records shedding further light on Eliezer, and the archives of the once-sizable Jewish community of Staedtel have disappeared.

According to another version of the family history, the Laqueurs had originally come from the East, from Lachwa, a small town in

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White Russia south of Minsk, or perhaps from Lak (there are two-score places bearing that name, most of them tiny hamlets in central Poland). Thousands of Jews from France and Germany had settled in Eastern Europe in the late Middle Ages and then re-migrated to the West in the late 17th century, fleeing the almost constant fighting and pillaging during and after the wars among the Russians, Poles, Swedes, and Ukrainians. Perhaps the Laqueurs were part of that wave.

What we were able to establish with some certainty is that the name Laqueur first appears in Staedtel in the early years of the 19th century, which is about the time Jews in the German-language areas of Central Europe received family names. It is spelled in a variety of ways in the documents: Laquer, Lacquer, Laqueer, Lacoeur. French names were much in fashion at the time in Staedtel and its vicinity, and surnames that pointed to professions, such as Graveur and Translateur, were quite common. Perhaps my family name had something to do with the application of lacquer to wood, but we simply do not know.

Jewish life in Staedtel in the 19th century was harsh, and the community was desperately poor. Food, clothing, and wood for heating were scarce; travel a rarity. The railway grid that spread across Europe, carrying prosperity with it, bypassed Staedtel, ensuring that it would remain a little village and leading its Jewish population further into decline. In 1842 there were 241 Jews; fifteen years later the number had dwindled to under 100; by the 1920's, the last Jew had left.

As the Laqueurs moved out from Staedtel to nearby towns such as Oels, Festenberg, Namslau, Brieg, and Medziborz (Neumittelwalde), their social and economic position improved. At the beginning of the 19th century, they were apparently employed as peddlers or, at best, traders, selling leather goods and spirits and buying cattle. An occasional male nurse or teacher was sprinkled among them. By the 1860's they had become "merchants" and gained respectability if not riches. Their letters also show that within one generation they had acquired a perfect mastery of German; Hebrew was forgotten, and Jewish-German, the dialect mixing Yiddish and German that had been their common language, was now frowned upon.

Laqueurs who continued to reside in Silesia would usually gather once a year in early June to visit the cemetery in Staedtel, a tradition that was continued by a dwindling band until 1937. But gradually, as the family scattered, relations among the various branches became distant and eventually ceased. And added to geographical dispersion were two other factors: conversions to Christianity and *Standesbewusstsein*—the awareness of one's position in society. In brief, those who had not quite "made it" became an embarrassment to the others. It was not primarily a question of income and poverty—no one was very rich in the family at the time—but of social standing: a physician or a lawyer was more highly respected than a merchant (unless the merchant was *very* well off). A government official, too, however low his rank, was regarded as a person of authority and far more presentable than, say, a commercial traveler.

AMONG foreign branches of the family, a Hungarian line emerged when Joseph Laqueur—it is unclear whether he was the son or grandson of Eliezer—moved to Budapest and married a certain Maria Braun. Some of his descendants Magyarized their name to Laki; today there are more than 60 Lakis in the Budapest telephone directory. Others chose the spelling Laquer. By fate, or perhaps genetic predisposition, a Laquer would collaborate with a Laqueur in pharmacological research in Holland in the 1920's. (Medicine has always been strongly represented in the family.) The Laqueur went on to produce synthetic testosterone; the Laquer, a professor at Temple University in Philadelphia until his death in 1954, was the first to isolate vitamin B-1.

In addition to the Hungarian, there was a Russian branch, which produced more exotic fruit still. Eliezer's son Moritz, a trader in leather goods, married a woman named Sarah, who bore him one son. At some point in 1810, he suddenly disappeared. He had converted to Christianity, studied medicine in Berlin and Dorpat (today Tartu, Estonia), and settled in Russia, where he changed his name to Boris Lakier. He then moved to Taganrog on the Sea of Azov where he headed the local quarantine station.

Boris would have lived out his days in this backwater of a backwater but for a freak occurrence. In 1825, Czar Alexander I visited the city, fell ill, and died. The task of signing the death certificate fell to Dr. Boris Lakier, an honor for which noble status was conferred upon him and his name was eventually inscribed in the *Ikonnikov*, the Russian list of aristocratic families.

Boris married again and concocted a fable to explain his lofty position in society. He claimed to be the descendant of a French judge, one De Laquierre, who had fled from Clermont-Ferrand to Russia during the French Revolution. By the end of the century, fable or no fable, this branch of the family had come to regard itself as Russian stock of impeccably pure quality; the terrible secret of its Jewish origins had been forgotten. Boris's three sons married within the Russian nobility, and their offspring produced several well-known men of letters, one or two Czarist ministers, a commander of the Black Sea fleet, a governor of Kiev, and the owner of a piano factory in Moscow that fell into bankruptcy in the 1880's.

Boris's third son, Alexander, had an especially strange fate. (I have written about him at length in my memoir, *Thursday's Child Has Far to Go.*) A lawyer by training, Alexander served for a time as secretary of the committee preparing for the emancipation of the serfs. A man of great intellectual curiosity and an inveterate traveler, he published accounts of foreign countries, including the first seri-

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ous Russian-language portrait of American political and social conditions, in leading Russian journals. Alexander was forgotten in his own lifetime but has recently been rediscovered by the Russian public as the author of an outstanding textbook on heraldry, a subject which has gained new interest on account of the Russian nationalist revival. Alexander's grandchildren lived through the Russian Revolution, lost their wealth, and emigrated. In the 1920's, they could be found in Paris; others went to Argentina by way of Turkey and Yugoslavia. One of them, a fluent Russian-speaker, currently serves in Argentina's embassy in Moscow.

Finally, there are the Laqueurs in Israel, who today, thanks to Nazism and World War II, constitute the family's largest single contingent. Many came in the 1930's; some arrived after the war, from Holland, Britain, Switzerland, and Latin America.

FAMILY ties, which had been loose or nonexistent before 1933, rapidly drew closer as the Nazi peril grew. To have an uncle or second cousin who could support one's application for a foreign landing permit became a matter of life and death. If in the end a substantial number of Laqueurs succeeded in escaping from Europe, this was largely the result of help rendered by distant kinsmen. And indeed relatively few members of the family—perhaps 20 to 25—perished in the Nazi mass murder (several more would die fighting with the Israeli army in 1948-49).

"Families, I hate you!" André Gide wrote. "Shut-in homes, closed doors, jealous possessions of happiness." But Gide never had to run for his life. By the time the Laqueurs rediscovered their family, the "closed doors" were those of foreign countries, and it was not "happiness" but physical survival that was at stake.

This was certainly true in my own case. In 1938 my parents had no money, and war was pending. The only feasible way for me to leave Germany was to obtain a student visa for study at the Hebrew University in Palestine. An uncle provided the wherewithal: two years' tuition and minimal living expenses. As it happened, this uncle was in a German penitentiary at the time, having run afoul of the Nuremberg laws (the charge was defilement of the Aryan race through sexual intercourse). But because he had been an officer and a highly decorated veteran of World War I, he was granted certain privileges, including the right to dispose of his property while in jail. Were it not for him, my departure from Germany on November 8, 1938, one day before *Kristallnacht*, would have been impossible.

A great deal of help came from the Dutch branch, headed by one of the two distinguished pharmaceutical researchers. And thanks to this branch's holdings—which included a division of a large laboratory in Latin America that the Germans aimed to acquire—the Nazi economics ministry extended a bare modicum of protection to Dutch members of the family as well. The researcher and his wife survived the war, although their children were deported toward the war's end (most of them managed to return).

A second cousin of mine, caught with his family in Holland at the outbreak of the conflict, hid with his parents in a small attic that was thought to be uninhabited. This Anne Frank-like existence was quite intolerable for a restless and adventurous boy, so in the middle of the war he made his way through occupied Belgium and France into Spain and ultimately to Palestine. The journey lasted almost a year, and included a stint as a foreign laborer in a German army installation; the problems entailed in this sort of life have been depicted in the film *Europa, Europa*. Yet another member of the family had a less heroic time of it; he seems to have survived by working for the Amsterdam *Judenrat*.

A number of Laqueurs made their way back to Germany after the war. Those who had survived in Turkey, half- or quarter-Jews according to the Nuremberg laws, returned in 1945. One of them became a career diplomat. Another, Richard Laqueur, had been a distinguished historian in the Weimar period and rector of one of the most prestigious German universities. When Hitler came to power, neither his Protestant faith nor his conservative and patriotic convictions protected him. During the war, already in his sixties, he ended up washing dishes in Chicago; after his return to Germany, he did not even get his professorship back.

FOR the Laqueur family, then, as for most other European Jewish families, Hitler's war against the Jews far exceeded in its impact any of the slow historical processes and individual decisions which had gradually dispersed our clan from its humble roots in Staedtel. But as we gathered in Givat Haim, the Holocaust was not the central memory or focus. Instead there was a desire to look back even further into the past, to learn about forgotten people and places. As I watched and listened to my kinsmen, I could not help wondering what we still had in common other than descent from Eliezer of Staedtel—and why so many of us had been drawn to this reunion and had devoted so much time and energy preparing for it.

Ours was obviously no longer a family in the conventional sense of the word, not even a compound or extended family, however broadly these terms might be interpreted. Our biological connections were minimal, and we shared no household or other significant social links. For the most part, as I noted at the outset, we had not even known of each other's existence a few months earlier. On the other hand, as anthropologists have learned, fictive kinship can be as strong as biological kinship, and to address a fellow member of the Laqueur tribe as a cousin did not, curiously enough, seem in the least out of place.

As I contemplated what held us together, for a few moments a wholly fantastic scene obtruded itself on my mind. What if Eliezer and his three sons were somehow able to join us that afternoon at

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Givat Haim? Their first reaction, I felt, would have been one of wonder at the seeming chaos confronting them, for there was no one on the scene who in any way resembled a head of the family, and everyone seemed to speak on an equal basis, irrespective of social rank, sex, or even age. How could our ancestors tell, from clothing, bearing, or language, which were the figures of substance or importance? In these circumstances, I suspect that our ancestors would have been drawn to the young people so prominent in the crowd, tall and well-built, many of whom were speaking Hebrew, the holy tongue, much better than even the most learned men of long-ago Staedtel.

But as I stirred myself from these thoughts, I found I still did not fully understand why we had gathered together. Was it just to see and be seen? Was it to discover firsthand a bit more about who we are and were, how the branches of our family tree had unfolded and grown? Or was there, in addition to personal and intellectual curiosity, perhaps something else animating us: some unnamed feeling of satisfaction or, better, defiance, all the more intense for our having survived history's most ghastly hour?

Whatever in the end drew us together at Givat Haim, it became apparent to me that if dispersal was one way of summarizing what had happened to us as a clan—for we had truly come together from the four corners of the earth—perhaps the real significance of our reunion could only be captured by a term like recovery or, even, normalization.

Genet Among the Palestinians

Martin Kramer

ON THE morning of September 19, 1982, the French writer Jean Genet visited the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila near Beirut. Two nights earlier, Israel had permitted its Lebanese allies to enter the surrounded camp, and they had massacred its Palestinian inhabitants. A walk through Shatila, wrote Genet, "resembled a game of hopscotch. . . . A photograph doesn't show how you must jump over the bodies as you walk along from one corpse to the next."

The "thick white smell of death" in Shatila inspired Genet to one last self-invention. He had been a thief and prisoner, then a world-famous novelist and dramatist. Now he would be reborn as a witness for the Palestinians. *Prisoner of Love*, his book-length memoir of the Palestinian *fedayeen*, appeared a month after his death in 1986. This was the first new writing Genet had produced in years, and it rekindled an interest in his life and work. A masterful new biography by Edmund White* more than satisfies that interest.

WHATEVER White's intent, he has reminded us that Genet, rather than embodying some collective disorder of his time, acted largely upon his own disorder. White thus finally breaks the spell of Jean-Paul Sartre's long-winded speculation, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr* (1952). That book, which canonized Genet at the age of forty-two, purported to be an "existential psychoanalysis," based on Sartre's lengthy conversations with his subject: an abandoned child, vagabond thief, army deserter, and homosexual prostitute who wrote five remarkable books in prison that swept him to the summit of French letters.

But as even Sartre himself acknowledged, Genet practiced certain economies when it came to self-revelatory truth, and so White relentlessly seeks out corroboration. Many of the documents, it turns out, refuse to corroborate.

White first shows how thoroughly Genet's own version of his childhood—drawn in sharp lines of poverty and abuse—was a myth, an affectation given credibility by Sartre. Born in Paris in 1910, Genet had been abandoned by his unwed mother and made a ward of the state. But the carpenter's family that was entrusted with his care gave Genet ample attention and affection. Raised in a farming village, he was not made to work,

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prospered in school, had plenty of books, and scored high on examinations. Contrary to his later claim, he did not have to steal to survive. ("You couldn't call them thefts," recalls one classmate. "He took some pennies from his mother to buy sweets, all kids do that.")

The effect of these first chapters is to suggest that Genet largely fabricated a grim childhood to fit his chosen *persona* as a renegade. Precocious and rebellious, the dandified Genet refused, as he put it, "to become an accountant or a petty official." And so he escaped from every apprenticeship, opting to become a petty thief. This eventually landed him in the notorious reform penitentiary at Mettray, a society of male outcasts governed by a counter-code of homosexuality, theft, and betrayal which Genet would later celebrate.

After stints of military service and desertions, Genet crossed Europe as a vagabond, and finally returned to Paris where he resumed his career of petty thievery and shoplifting, specializing in rare books. ("He may have been a thug," writes White, "but he was a highly literary one.") In the 1940's he was often in prison, where he wrote the novels and poems, beginning with *Our Lady of the Flowers*, which brought him to the attention of Jean Cocteau and the leading literary lights of Paris. They lobbied to save him from the life sentence of a repeat offender, and with the benefit of a pardon, he settled into the role of the barely domesticated bad boy of French letters.

GENET'S "resolute aestheticism" is an acquired taste. His arresting language consistently displays genius, an achievement all the more astonishing in an author who left school at the age of twelve. The themes celebrated in his work—theft, murder, homosexual eroticism—have the usual appeal of that which is deemed "scandalous." The frequent lack of narrative coherence adds a pastiche of the absurd.

White briefly considers each of Genet's works, but only to set them afloat on a river of detail about Genet's couplings and uncouplings, both intellectual and physical. This is dense biography—no bedroom door left unopened, no literary liaison unexplored to its furthest implication.

From the mass of detail, though, White does discern a striking pattern. Genet invested himself completely in a succession of lovers and friends. He shared out his publishers' advances and royalties almost as soon as they were paid, setting up his favorites in houses while he lived in cheap hotels near train stations. But so many of his intimates ended badly, often by their own hand, that even Genet began to wonder whether he cast a malevolent spell. That he could infect others with a particularly virulent nihilism would soon be demonstrated on a larger canvas.

In wartime Paris, when Genet first appeared on the literary scene, he practiced an indifference to politics. He said and wrote nothing political, and took both a German soldier and a member of the Resistance as lovers. In 1952, Genet informed Sartre that "in politics nothing new can be contributed by a homosexual," since the significance of homosexuality was "a refusal to continue the world." He often repudiated political readings of his plays, maintaining that they occupied "a domain where morality is replaced by the aesthetics of the stage."

But the favorable reception of Genet's work owed a great deal to changes in the political weather. This is particularly true of his best-known plays, *The Balcony*, *The Blacks*, and *The Screens*, all written during the 1950's. Through allusions to democracy's corruption, racial oppression, and colonial domination, they tapped the growing self-doubt of France, Europe, and America. The fact that *The Blacks* ran off-Broadway for almost four years beginning in 1961 (with James Earl Jones in a leading role) can only be understood in the context of the rise of the civil-rights movement. And even if *The Screens* was, in White's judgment, "more in praise of unregenerate individualism than of third-world nationalism," it could only be read as an indictment of the war in Algeria, and could only be staged in France four years after de Gaulle pulled out of the war. Even then, angry demonstrators disrupted performances.

When his literary inspiration was finally exhausted, Genet sought in politics a fulfillment that had eluded him in art. His books, he declared, were "part of a dream, a daydream. And since I outlived this dream, this daydream, I had to take action in order to achieve a sort of fullness of life." But which action, and for whom? White observes that Genet thought politics "must be a purge of anger and not a reconciliation of differences." That could only mean violence. But although Genet claimed to detest France, he found no "fullness" in that country's own purges of anger. (He showed up at the Sorbonne during the 1968 student uprising, but refused to address the crowd.)

Abroad, however, various conflicts seemed to embody the stylized contrast of black (men) against white (men) he had dramatized on the stage. "I wish I were black," he told the American novelist William S. Burroughs after he visited Chicago to write up the Democratic convention in 1968. "I want to feel what they feel." The fact that Genet spoke no passable English or Arabic only enhanced the aesthetic charge of the two causes he finally adopted: the Black Panthers and the Palestinians.

GENET'S affair with the Black Panthers brought him briefly again to America in 1970. He visited some fifteen campuses, lecturing in support of the imprisoned Panther Bobby Seale, and rubbing shoulders with such radical celebrities as Angela Davis, Jane Fonda, and Allen Ginsberg. For a while, writing on behalf of the Panthers filled his void: "Literature, as I practiced it formerly, was gratuitous. Today it is in the service of a cause. It is against America." But Genet was never thoroughly taken by the Panthers, who were not the rigorous revolutionaries of his fantasy. Even before they broke up, Genet began his search anew; it now took

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him to an ungoverned corner of the kingdom of Jordan.

Genet's sensuality had long been stimulated by the Arab world, beginning with his service as a soldier in Syria and Morocco. But it was the dramatic pose of the Palestinians that moved him to action. Genet described himself as "enthralled" by the Palestinian hijacking of civilian airliners to Jordan in August and ("Black") September 1970; a month later, he was with the *fedayeen* in northern Jordan, at the invitation of Yasir Arafat. The appeal of armed youths bordered on the erotic:

> The first two *fedayeen* were so handsome I was surprised at myself for not feeling any desire for them. And it was the same the more Palestinian soldiers I met, decked with guns, in leopard-spotted uniforms and red berets tilted over their eyes, each not merely a transfiguration but also a materialization of my fantasies.

Genet had found his redemption. He repeatedly returned to Jordan, logging some six months in the remote camps of the *fedayeen*. He freely described his bond with the Palestinians as an "irrational affinity," resting "on an emotional—perhaps intuitive, sensual—attraction; I am French, but I defend the Palestinians wholeheartedly and automatically. They are in the right because I love them."

Unfortunately for the Palestinians, Genet never developed their defense much beyond this. He detested King Hussein, who made war against the Palestinian *fedayeen* in 1970. But did his passion confer more rightness on *his* Arabs than did the lifetime devotion of, say, Glubb Pasha, British adviser to the king, who had commanded and lived among Jordan's bedouin troops? "I went to the Arab countries in 1920 as an ordinary regimental officer in the British Army," wrote Glubb. "I stayed there for thirty-six years because I loved them." Nor was Glubb alone. There are shelves of similarly enamored writing on armed Arabs in the hills and deserts east of the Jordan, beginning with T.E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. It is still possible to read these texts as art, but no one thinks to trust them, and Genet's *Prisoner of Love* is no exception.

GENET did not love the Jews. Sartre wrote that he "played" at being an anti-Semite: "When he's cornered, he announces that he 'could never sleep with a Jew.' Israel can rest at peace." Sartre offered this explanation: "Since Genet wants his lovers to be executioners, he should never be sodomized by a victim. What repels Genet in Jews is that he finds himself in their situation."

Like so much of Sartre on Genet, this speculation completely misses the mark. Genet thoroughly eroticized those other victims of French racism, North African Arabs; an Algerian high-wire artist named Abdallah became his most enduring love. And he later would perceive the Jews as particularly ruthless executioners.

White stays closer to the evidence, but cannot decide. In an introduction he wrote to *Prisoner of Love*, White claimed that Genet, while anti-Zionist, was not anti-Semitic. According to White, Genet saw Israelis as "master manipulators of the media as well as of brainwashing techniques, but his objections are political, not racist. He attacks Israeli policies, not 'Jewish traits' (the very phrase is racist)."

In researching this biography, White did speak to Jews who heard Genet make offensive remarks, and this has persuaded him to pronounce the question of Genet's anti-Semitism "an open one." Still, in Genet's defense, White avers that he never published a single anti-Semitic word, and that he was tied by friendship to several Jews.

But Genet's offhand remarks and friendships are beside the point. For Genet, Jews represented the living affirmation of morality over aestheticism. He felt himself covered by what he called a "thick black layer of Judeo-Christian morality," which he longed to strip away. The Palestinian struggle was very much his struggle precisely because Zionism, along with imperialism, represented "the last incarnations of Judeo-Christian morality, which is itself the master of terms." When Genet wrote that "words are terrible, and Israel is a terrifying manipulator of signs," he meant both Israel in history and Israel the state.

Genet found even the alphabet of the Jews terrifying. Driving from Damascus to Israeli-surrounded Beirut in 1982, he saw Hebrew *signs*—"as painful as seeing Gothic lettering in Paris during the German occupation."

> Most of the letters were squat and rectangular; they read from right to left in a broken horizontal line. One or two had a crane-like plume on top: three slim pistils bearing three stigmata and waiting for the bees who'd scatter their age-old, nay, primeval, pollen all over the world.

Genet recalled these letters from his childhood, carved in stone: the letters of the law, repelling a man who believed in no preexisting law, who affirmed that rules had to be invented by man, that they should be "more aesthetic than moral," and that his own rules were "against the rules, I mean against the law." Israel, armed with its law and its signs, seemed to Genet even more terrible than the Western imperialism it mimed: it was "a loathsome, temporal power, colonialist in a way which few dare to imitate, having become the Definitive Judge which it owes to its longstanding curse as much as to its chosen status."

FOR Genet, who had stood before many judges, Israel's judgment represented the definitive rap, which he could beat only by assimilating himself completely to the Palestinian struggle. He often said that the Palestinians did more for him than he for them. Indeed, they exonerated him.

In return, Genet gave the Palestinians bad counsel. Since Israel could always manipulate words and signs, Genet urged the Palestinians to use violence. Genet, for his part, would teach his own countrymen and Europeans in general

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not to "confuse the brutality of the Israelis with the violence of the Palestinians, which in my opinion in any case is good."

In 1972, the terrorist Black September movement seized Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, an operation that ended in a blaze of gunfire and death. Genet blamed Israel: "This death of the Jews was desired by Israel. It was necessary that 'all Israel should lament,' that the 'Israelites should cry vengeance.'" But to the Palestinians, he acclaimed the "perfect logic" of Black September's decision to carry the struggle to Europe. It was another example of Genet's drawing beloved friends to strategies of self-destruction: Israel quickly took retaliation in Europe, within months claiming the lives of two of Genet's dearest Palestinians, PLO representatives in Paris and Rome.

And in the end, Genet failed to sway European opinion, too. His book on the Palestinians was delayed, and when in 1977 Genet extended his distinction between bad brutality and good violence to a defense of the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany, it created a furor against him across Europe. From then until his death in 1986, he remained isolated, in the close company of a few Palestinian friends and a Moroccan vagabond, his last lover.

BEIRUT inspired Genet's last creative burst. His "Four Hours in Shatila" displays all that was brilliant and flawed in his committed essays. The description is riveting, as the reader meanders with Genet among the bloated, blackened corpses, observing each in clinical detail. But his political speculations are blurred and skewed, and suggest no exit. Genet could convey something of Palestinian suffering, but he had no plan to alleviate it.

Indeed, such suffering contributed to his own equilibrium. "I would like the world not to change so that I can be against the world," he said. And: "The day the Palestinians become institutionalized, I will no longer be on their side. The day the Palestinians become a nation like other nations, I will no longer be there."

This sentiment is still shared by many other foreign friends of the Palestinian cause. Theirs, too, is a suffocating love. Genet once called Lawrence of Arabia an "impostor," whose supposed friendship toward the Arabs concealed his function as an agent of Western imperialism. But Genet, "prisoner of love," was perhaps the more insidious impostor: an agent of Western nihilism, urging freedom for the unfree, provided they forever remain prisoners of hate.

Syllabus Conundrum?

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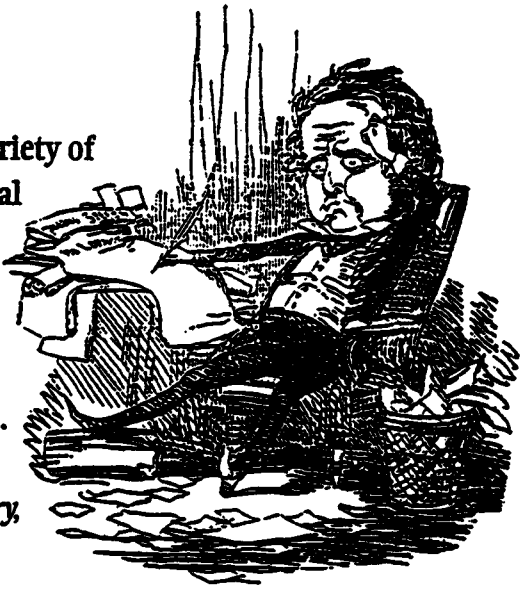

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Welfare Feminism

Midge Decter

It is fair to say that the *Nation*, having come out every week for almost 130 years now, is the country's longest-lived and most consistent voice of the Left. Therefore on opening a new issue one might, depending on one's outlook, expect to be soothed or stirred to passion, illuminated or infuriated. The one thing one does not usually experience is surprise. A striking exception is the column called "Subject to Debate" in the May 30, 1994 issue. The column's author is the much-prized poet and radical feminist ideologue Katha Pollitt, and on this occasion her subject is welfare mothers.

Pollitt begins by pointing out that women have been unfairly blamed for many things, beginning with the banishment from Eden and on down to the serial murderer Jeffrey Dahmer (whose father, says Pollitt, accused Dahmer's mother of being a reluctant breast-feeder). And now women are being subjected by virtually everyone to the most unfair accusation of all: that they are the cause of poverty.

That women are responsible for poverty, Pollitt informs us, is now a matter of wide and bipartisan consensus, subscribed to by people otherwise as disparate in attitude as Charles Murray and Eleanor Holmes Norton, Dan Quayle and Bill Clinton, the editors of *National Review* and the editorialists of the *New York Times*. All these people agree that unwed mothers, particularly teenagers, are the driving force behind poverty and crime. "If," as she sums up this consensus, "mothers got married and stayed married, children would be provided for, the economy would flourish, crime would go down and your taxes, too."

About how to achieve this blissful state Pollitt finds no consensus. Mickey Kaus, she explains, wants to force welfare moms to take low-paid, state-funded jobs, and, if they balk, put their children in orphanages. Charles Murray, on the other hand, "wants to skip the preliminaries and get right to the orphanage part."

In addition, more than 30 states are engaged in instituting punitive welfare reforms, which involve such policies as refusing any further grants for children conceived by women on welfare—all of which are intended in one way or another to prevent more welfare babies from being born. "And since this is America, land of family values and pro-life, this end must be achieved in a way that combines the minimum of money and the maximum of social control."

For instance, Pollitt contends, forcing welfare recipients to use Norplant has an appeal ("social control") that simply making birth control free and accessible does not—as, to say the least, government-funded abortions for poor pregnant women above the Medicaid line also do not. We are, then, as Pollitt (evidently having forgotten about Norplant) sees it, "moving toward a system that will force poor pregnant women to give birth and will then take their babies away."

But whether we do actually reach this point or not, the idea behind proposals to make good on President Clinton's promise to "end welfare as we know it" is, in Pollitt's view, a noxious one. To say that unwed mothers cause poverty "is like saying hungry people cause famine or sick people cause disease."

The illegitimacy rate, she argues, does not explain why so many American businesses have moved their factories to places like Malaysia, where women are paid sixteen cents an hour; nor why corporations are laying off thousands of white-collar workers; nor why one out of five college graduates is working at a job that requires no degree. "Imagine for a moment that every teenage girl in West Virginia got married before getting pregnant. How would that create jobs or raise wages . . . or bring back the coal industry?"

In Pollitt's opinion, it would be closer to the truth to put the case the other way around: that poverty creates early and unplanned childbearing. After all, kids all across the income spectrum are having sex and getting pregnant. The difference is that girls with bright futures—"college, jobs, travel"—have abortions, while the ones who have nothing to postpone become mothers. "What none of the men who have dominated the welfare discussion betray any sign of understanding is that babies are the centuries-old way that women have put meaning, love, pleasure, hope, and self-respect into their lives."

In response to the view that these young mothers would be better off if they could get married and stay married, Pollitt can only muster a sneer: "'Welfare dependency' would vanish," she writes, "replaced, as God and nature planned, by husband-dependency."

And so to her conclusion about where the present consensus is leading us: "Orphanages for children, and for their mothers, 'workfare,' jail, the street, the church-basement cot—all in the name of values."

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WHAT is one to make of this? On the practical side, Pollitt seems to have little more to advocate than free birth control and free abortions. This, of course, is neither a novel nor a surprising bit of advocacy, especially for someone on the Left. Nor is it surprising that Pollitt should grossly caricature a position with which she is taking issue: to wit, characterizing a belief in the need for welfare reform as the belief that women are to blame for poverty. Caricature is a time-honored tradition of radical argumentation.

What is surprising is that Pollitt herself has nothing, not one word, to say about welfare, though it is ostensibly a key object of her concern. Since she foresees that reform will lead to dire consequences for welfare mothers—in addition to losing their children, they will be left with nothing but jail, prostitution, and/or homelessness—does she mean by implication to defend the system as it is? Her economic "analysis"—in which, no doubt as the result of a certain unmanageable passion about corporations, she lumps together welfare poverty with white-collar underemployment and unemployment—would suggest that she favors high trade barriers (what then of her poor sisters in the third world?). But this conclusion she does not explicitly draw.

Most surprising of all, she has nothing whatever to say about the children, beyond suggesting that placing them in orphanages would be an injustice to their mothers. Yet it surely cannot have escaped her notice that it is the children who are the real source of the current sense of crisis about the welfare system, with their absconded fathers running a close second.

Clearly, Pollitt's main (or perhaps only) interest in welfare and poverty is to exonerate women from any blame for society's troubles. Ardent feminist though she may be, in a time when gunplay with assault weapons among children has become an ordinary everyday occurrence—as have the deaths of babies and young children from neglect and abuse—to concentrate on the question of whether women are or are not at fault seems . . . well, a trifle light-minded, to say the least.

There ought by now to be some way to get the minds of privileged women off themselves. A woman who can suggest of, say, a sixteen-year-old pregnant girl, blessed or lucky enough to find a young man to marry her and be a father to her baby, that she is merely exchanging one "dependency" for another is someone who, for all her intellectual and political pretensions, has rarely, if ever, looked beyond the end of her own well-cared-for nose.

From time immemorial poets have been granted a license, which, to be sure, not all of them have taken, to be deliberately foolish—*narrenfreiheit*, it was once called, the freedom of fools. But as Katha Pollitt so well illustrates, even this special dispensation is capable of being abused.

Hypocrisy on Haiti

Joshua Muravchik

SENATOR John Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, is worried that America's "credibility as a world leader" is in jeopardy. Why? Because "Haiti's military rulers continue to thumb their noses at the United States." Washington has tried by peaceful means to make them release their illegitimate grip on power, "but nothing has worked—not diplomacy, not tougher sanctions, not a potential naval embargo."

This search for a negotiated solution has failed, says Senator Kerry, "because there was no believable threat of force" on our part. If the regime in Port au Prince does not relent, "we must be willing to seek international approval to use military force." This, proclaims the headline of Kerry's recent op-ed piece in the *New York Times* (May 16), will "Make Haiti's Thugs Tremble."

Kerry challenges "those who supported Presidents Bush and Reagan" when "we intervened in Grenada, Panama, and Iraq" to explain "why the Haitian situation is different." He argues that "Every individual reason given for those previous interventions is present in the plural in Haiti—to protect innocent lives, to end chaos, to restore order, to root out drug traffickers."

KERRY's list, however, is not complete. One consideration he omits is the danger to *American* lives. Al-

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beit in small numbers, Americans were in peril in Grenada and Panama; not so in Haiti.

A still bigger omission from Kerry's list is American security. This was the main reason for the interventions in Grenada and Panama—and for Desert Storm. Grenada was invaded because the Communist dictators who were ruling the island at the time had made it into an outpost for the Soviet Union, with which the United States was locked, defensively, in a mortal struggle called the cold war. Iraq was attacked because Saddam Hussein had committed an act of naked aggression, and threatened to drive for regional hegemony and control over much of the world's energy sources.

Panama, alone of the three cases invoked by Kerry, bears some similarity to Haiti in that one issue involved was the vindication of the results of a free election. But American security was also at issue in Panama: the cold war was not yet completely over and the Panamanian dictator had allied himself with America's enemies in the hemisphere. Moreover, he threatened America's enduring treaty rights in the Panama Canal.

THESE omissions—American lives and American security—are answers that supporters of those earlier military actions might give to explain the difference between them and the case of Haiti. But what answer would Kerry himself give? For the question he asks of those supporters applies just as well to him.

Kerry, after all, has been a frequent opponent of U.S. military action. He launched his political career as the leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. No sooner had he arrived in the Senate than he made himself a principal opponent of military aid to America's allies in Central America. And when the Senate debated the use of force against Iraq, Kerry was volubly opposed. He declared: "In my heart and in my gut and in my mind I do not believe in sending people to war unless it is imperative."

Moreover, whereas Kerry now says that the threat of military action will strengthen our diplomatic hand with Haiti, he rejected the very same argument with respect to Iraq:

> The danger of that is that those who vote for the use of force will create a situation where it becomes more, rather than less, likely that the force they hope will not be used will, in fact, be used. They escalate the stakes. They narrow the box further.

Why does this full-feathered dove reach for the sword on Haiti? Is it perhaps precisely because American lives and security are *not* at stake in Haiti that Kerry is willing to fight there? Is it that in Haiti we could fight with hands unsullied by selfish motive? Michael Lind of the *National Interest* has called this the politics of "national disinterest": "The less a policy benefits the nation undertaking it, the nobler the policy and the nation." Does the fact that the deposed President Aristide—whose restoration to power would be the goal of an invasion of Haiti—is fiercely anti-American make such an invasion all the nobler?

YET whatever the answer, the issue may be academic, since there turns out on closer inspection to be less hawkishness in Kerry's position than meets the eye. For to say, as he does, that we should "seek international approval" for the use of force is not the same thing as saying that we should use force. What if international approval is not forthcoming?

Near the end of his piece, Kerry writes that "In the absence of clear and present danger, the United States should not use force unilaterally." In other words, any invasion of Haiti must be carried out with a coalition of regional partners. But in spite of private assurances from certain countries in the area, it is doubtful that such partners will be found. So, even where Haiti is concerned, this dove-turned-hawk will in all likelihood find that the conditions are not suitable for the use of force.

Since I believe that it would be unwise for the U.S. to invade Haiti—where, to repeat, neither American lives nor American security interests are at risk, and where, in addition, the deposed, democratically elected president is no democrat himself—the emptiness of Kerry's advocacy is perhaps to be welcomed. But this is not the case with the general position he takes against unilateral action by the U.S.

For a superpower, the essence of foreign policy is not to act only in the face of "clear and present dangers," but to prevent such dangers from materializing by timely assertions of power and extensions of aid to others under threat. To forfeit the right to do these things unilaterally—to subsume our judgment to that of international civil servants like Boutros Boutros Ghali—would be an abdication of responsibility for which we and the world will pay dearly (as is likely to happen in the case of Bosnia). But this is a lesson of our success in the cold war that old-time doves like Kerry—most of whom recently voted against unilaterally lifting the arms embargo to Bosnia—still seem unwilling to learn.

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Campaign Bound

STANDING FIRM. BY DAN QUAYLE. *HarperCollins-Zondervan. 402 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by ANDREW FERGUSON

EVER since the basketball star Charles Barkley admitted in a press conference that he had not read his own just-published autobiography, reviewers have been well-advised to approach celebrity memoirs with care. How thoroughly, nowadays, can you judge a man by the book that bears his name? It is taken for granted that no politician (or athlete, or actor, or businessman) would suffer the indignity of staring at a blank computer screen, sweating out the inspiration to tell his own story with sufficient eloquence and candor. No, the self-respecting memoirist today hires a professional to become inspired for him.

This much is assumed, and generally goes unremarked. How closely the resulting book reflects its subject is a dicier question. Are the tone and mood the subject's or the ghostwriter's? Who thought up the funny lines; how genuine is the ardor; are the tears his or a crocodile's? And to whose sloppiness do we ascribe the inevitable solecisms and typos and errors of fact? Through these deep waters the judicious reviewer moves cautiously, and particularly so in the case of former Vice President Dan Quayle, whose own memoir has just been published.

No other political figure in our time has been treated with such salivary disdain. It began in the presidential campaign of 1988, when, after having labored eight years as a dutiful, principled U.S. Senator, Quayle was transformed overnight by his own unease and a predatory press corps into a kind of icon in reverse, a coast-to-coast gag, a brand name the merest mention of which could trigger laughter from any audience anywhere. Four years later, during the 1992 campaign, things had gotten so bad that Republican speakers out on the hustings were instructed, as a matter of policy, not to mention Quayle's name, even to partisan crowds; it was thought that the inevitable snickers would undermine the speaker's effectiveness.

The publication of *Standing Firm* is therefore the opening salvo in Dan Quayle's personal Inchon—his calculated attempt to reclaim his reputation and reintroduce himself to an electorate that he hopes will deem him presidential by 1996. This is a heavy burden to place on a celebrity memoir—which makes it doubly unpleasant to report that Dan Quayle has written, or authorized to be written in his name, a bad book.

There is no reason to overstate the case: as a politician's memoir, *Standing Firm* is no worse than most examples of the genre. Sentences parse, the grammar is good, ideas follow one another in the appropriate sequence. The hand of the professional (unidentified) is shown in the way each chapter ends with a foreshadowing of the next. But if it is no worse, *Standing Firm* is also no better than others of its kind. In that sense, the book is roughly analogous to Quayle himself: an average fellow of moderate gifts, whose every deficiency is painfully enlarged by the unique circumstances in which he finds himself.

THERE is a great deal of Dan Quayle in *Standing Firm* (I do not mean this ironically). Even at the height of his national ridicule, one could see in him the self-assurance, even cockiness, of the natural pol—a great American type that is merely an older version of the Big Man on Campus. When the abuse hit him like a hurricane, he soldiered on with the air of a man who could not quite believe that people could be so stupid as to think him stupid.

In his book, he is still unembarrassed by his vanity. "Throughout my life I've loved beating the odds," he (or whoever) writes. "I switched elementary schools five times. Whenever I arrived at a new one, the teacher would put me in the last row, which was reserved for the slow kids. Within a matter of weeks I'd made it to the front of the room." He tells us that as he was being considered for George Bush's running mate, he daydreamed of the glorious headlines that would inevitably follow. Later, he reminds us how good a campaigner he is. And so on. In these passages, and the many others like them, his insouciance is almost charming.

But insouciance can quickly shade into indiscretion. While *Standing Firm* is free of the comical slips of the tongue for which he became famous, one gets the idea nevertheless that Quayle is not always aware of what he is saying. To take an example: Presidents and Vice Presidents routinely give trinkets—tie clasps, key chains, cuff links, all stamped with the presidential seal—to visitors who come to pay homage; the supplicants prize the stuff ever after as mementos of their brush with greatness. Does Quayle really want to tell us that he used to refer to such trinkets as "chum," fish bait?

Similarly, Quayle writes of his efforts to fire Richard Truly, the director of NASA, who by the Vice President's account had been a disaster: "I thanked him for his service and told him that we wanted to find an ambassadorship for him." Now, paying off incompetent officials with foreign postings is a time-honored practice, but the payers rarely confess to it. Actually, they *never* confess to it. From

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Quayle, the admission is not so much refreshing as unnerving.

SINCE this book's publication in May, much has been made of Quayle's feline swipes at his Republican rivals. And they are titillating, at least as Washingtonians measure titillation. But there is also no denying the churlishness that creeps in, especially when Quayle turns from rivals to colleagues. Thus, he writes with great ambivalence about William Kristol, his chief of staff, freely acknowledging Kristol's political savvy while never passing up a chance to mention his reputation in Washington as a leaker. And the digs at Kristol are as nothing compared with the swipes at Quayle's press secretary, the otherwise anonymous Dave Beckwith, who handled the thorniest job in the administration with wit, ingenuity, and (as we now see) thankless loyalty. In fact, with one obvious exception, none of Quayle's fellow Republicans enjoys the petting and cooing Quayle reserves for . . . Ted Kennedy: "A guy's guy, loud and fun-loving, but he also loves children and is very attentive to them."

The obvious exception is George Bush, but the Bush of *Standing Firm*—loyal, compassionate, resolute—is utterly one-dimensional. Surely, the relationship between Bush and Quayle was more complicated than that. The fiercely conservative Quayle, as Vice President, argued against most of the President's signature domestic initiatives, which were models of Republican me-tooism: the Clean Air Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Civil Rights Act, the budget deal of 1990. Regarding Bush, Quayle's discretion is at last set firmly in place; there must be much here that is left unsaid.

In the end, the cumulative impression of *Standing Firm* is one of numbing irrelevance. Quayle's analysis of the Bush administration's ultimate failure is conservative boilerplate, familiar to any reader of op-ed columns. And does anyone any longer care about the intricacies of Richard Darman's relationship with John Sununu? There are several long stretches of wheel-spinning as Quayle ruminates over his bad press. "Do you know," he asks, "how many favorable stories it takes to overcome one zinger by Johnny Carson?" Too many, is the unsurprising answer, and Quayle proceeds to relate in great detail his efforts to undermine the media's bizarre obsession with his famous gaffes. So great was the media's obsession, in fact, that Quayle cannot stop thinking about it.

Several pundits have said that the Vice President should have resisted the pleasures of a conventional score-settling memoir and produced instead a treatise on the great policy questions of the age, as direct evidence of his *gravitas*. Had Quayle written such a book, of course, most of these same pundits would have ignored or lambasted it—yet another instance of the kind of double bind Quayle is forever faced with. As it turns out, he wants both to settle old scores and to be taken seriously, and unfortunately he seems unable to distinguish between the two. This makes it hard to take him seriously.

DAN QUAYLE was a good Senator, an exemplar of the conservative Hoosiers who sent him to Washington by large majorities. He was also a superior Vice President: loyal, tireless, politically astute, a voice for principle in an ideologically flaccid administration. *Standing Firm* asks us, by implication, to think of him now as something more—a potential President. Even though this book has become a big best-seller, few readers, I suspect, will respond as Quayle hopes.

In mitigation, his partisans—for there are such—will say that the press's opprobrium was simply too great for him to overcome. A few months ago it would have been easier to agree with this assessment, when Quayle's greatest obstacle was the media-manufactured caricature of a man irretrievably out of his depth. With *Standing Firm*, his greatest obstacle has become the suspicion that the press, amazingly, had it right the first time.

D, M & P

JEWISH COOKING IN AMERICA. By JOAN NATHAN. *Knopf. 463 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by NAOMI MUNSON

WHEN I was in college, living on my own and cooking for myself for the first time, I asked my maternal grandmother to give me her recipe for chicken soup. Her response: "My secret is I always grate a tomato into the pot while the soup is cooking." My paternal grandmother, while somewhat more expansive, was no more helpful: "You take a pullet" (a what?) "and throw it in a pot. Then you throw in some salt and pepper, a few vegetables, and cook it until it's ready."

It did not occur to me to ask my mother—for the simple reason that she never cooked chicken soup. Oh, she made a thick vegetable soup from the leftover turkey carcass after Thanksgiving; cold watercress soup was in her repertoire; I even have a vague memory of borscht—though it may have come out of a jar. But "Jewish penicillin"? Never.

My mother did not make *tsimmes* either; or *hamentaschen*, or *cholent*, or dill pickles. Baking brownies was one of the ways she found to help us pass the time on rainy days. Hallah, on the other hand, was an exotic sort of cake my paternal grandmother baked when she knew we were coming for dinner—even if it was not the Sabbath. I can bake a mean pie crust, thanks to my mother's expert tutelage, but so far as I knew, only professional bakers were capable of producing *rugelakh*.

Now that I think about these matters, it seems obvious that in my mother's kitchen, speed and ease were of the essence. Brownies take a lot less time and effort than hallah, and *rugelakh* are hardly as easy as pie. Still, the gaps in my own—and my siblings'—Jewish culinary education cannot be laid entirely, or even chiefly, at the door of expediency.

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My sisters, my brother, and I grew up as Jews, but very American Jews. We knew all the Bible stories; we had immigrant grandparents who spoke Yiddish, and we loved the sound of the language and of their accents in English; we were convinced that Jews were the best and smartest and funniest people on earth; we were passionate about Anne Frank, and about Israel, and we were proud and delighted when Sandy Koufax refused to pitch on Yom Kippur—or was it Rosh Hashanah?

There was the rub. Together with the vast majority of our Jewish friends and acquaintances, we knew only one thing for sure about the High Holy Days: we got to stay home from school, and we did not spend them praying in the synagogue. In fact, we scarcely set foot in a synagogue, unless some relative was celebrating a bar mitzvah. For the Passover seder, we went to grandparents. On Hanukkah we lit candles—and got presents—but as for the other holidays, we knew about them vaguely but never actually saw them observed. We did not keep the Sabbath. And we certainly did not obey the dietary laws. We were, in short, one big happy generation of fiercely nationalistic but deracinated Jews. Knowing how to cook a brisket would have seemed to us highly—and amusingly—irrelevant.

Then we and our friends began to grow up, to marry, to have or look forward to having children of our own. And suddenly we realized that those children would not have immigrant grandparents to tell them stories in Yiddish. They would not get hallah at grandma's because grandma did not bake hallah. The first bar-mitzvah service they were likely to attend might well be their own. Most worrisome of all, they would be raised not by Jews who knew the traditions well enough to decide to reject them, but by Jews who had lived in blissful ignorance.

How to keep *our* children Jews? To those of us who cared—and there were plenty already who did not—the answer was plain. We began joining synagogues, to a greater or lesser degree keeping kosher, and learning something about our Jewish heritage. Our mentor in matters of ritual and law was the late Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin; his two books, *To Be a Jew* and *To Pray as a Jew*, taught us how to make our houses kosher for Passover, how to arrange for the circumcision of our sons, how to keep the Sabbath.

WHICH left us with the problem of food. Learning the dietary rules was easy enough, and following them was certainly possible—if not entirely pleasurable. There was surely no shortage of cookbooks around to help us make a silk purse out of a brisket. (If there is a synagogue sisterhood anywhere in the country that has failed to produce a kosher cookbook, I have not heard of it.) And there was an author who had done more than her fair share to advance the cause of kosher cookery: Joan Nathan.

Joan Nathan's *The Jewish Holiday Kitchen* (1979) came to me as a wedding gift fourteen years ago, and it is the most-used cookbook in my house. Helpfully arranged by holiday, it provides everything a novice might need in the way of kosher culinary art, including the secret of perfect matzah balls every time—an art plenty of non-novices could benefit from as well. But *The Jewish Holiday Kitchen* is more than merely a training manual for the uninitiated; in fact, it is more than merely a cookbook.

Consider, for example, Joan Nathan's recipe for Friday-night hallah. After quoting relevant verses from the biblical books of Numbers and Exodus, she introduces us to "Ada Baum Lipsitz of Boston," who "believes she was 'born making hallah.' She has been making the sweet twisted loaf once a week for the last 74 years." Or again, under the recipe for *Huevos Haminadav* (hard-boiled eggs, Sephardi style), we learn:

> In Judaism, as in most religions, superstitions abound surrounding the egg. Moroccan girls, for example, step over fish roe to increase their fertility. Barrenness in a Jewish woman is cured by eating a double-yoked egg. In circumcision rites, an egg ensures the sexual capacity of the young boy. . . . It is said that

ANATOMY OF THE AUSCHWITZ DEATH CAMP

Edited by Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum
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an egg thief brings seven years' bad luck and often death. The body of such a thief rolls around the grave and is never still.

The quotations from the Bible and from Sholem Aleichem, the descriptions of customs and superstitions, and the anecdotes from her own and others' families set *The Jewish Holiday Kitchen* apart from other kosher cookbooks. Nathan is more than a purveyor of recipes, she is a folklorist of food. And now the pattern she established in *The Jewish Holiday Kitchen* (and in her previous book, *The Flavor of Jerusalem*, co-authored by Judy Stacey Goldman) she continues and embellishes to sterling effect in her latest effort, *Jewish Cooking in America*.

The new book is arranged in fairly traditional order, with separate sections for appetizers, breads, soups, fish, meat, chicken, vegetables, grains and dairy foods, cakes, cookies, and even drinks, as well as a chapter on "Passover Tastes and Traditions." Everywhere it provides the traditional markings of D, M, and P, for Dairy, Meat, and Pareve (neutral). But *Jewish Cooking in America* is anything but traditional. It is really a comprehensive culinary history of the Jews who came from all over the world to settle all over the United States.

Joan Nathan offers a truly eclectic array of recipes: everything from a baked-bean-with-brisket dish I remember from my maternal grandmother's kitchen to an exquisitely fashionable (and delicious) chicken with sun-dried tomatoes and shiitake mushrooms, and beyond. There are recipes for five different kinds of matzah balls—including Cajun and Dallas (the latter with pecans), in addition to the more familiar variety. There are eight wonderful recipes for brisket and, yes, chicken soup—not to mention Wolfgang Puck's Jewish pizza, Bukharan chicken pilau, Iraqi braised lamb with beets and tomatoes, and even a recipe for corning your own beef.

IN HER introduction, Joan Nathan also provides a comprehensive explanation of the laws of *kashrut* and holiday traditions. And along with the recipes and the lessons, she again offers entertaining and enlightening snippets of American Jewish history. Thus, a recipe for Friday night chicken with peppers, deriving from no less a personage than Judah Benjamin, Secretary of State for the Confederacy, comes complete with quotations from a contemporaneous letter by Mrs. Jefferson Davis. And then there is the story of Tillie and Hyman Gold:

> [They] were struggling in Brooklyn, selling insurance and wine bricks during the Depression. One day Mr. Gold's cousin, who made a living sharpening knives and grinding vegetables, got into an argument and ended up in jail. Hyman bailed him out and the grating machine ended up in the hallway of his house. One day Mrs. Gold said, "Let me grind up horseradish."

And that was the beginning of the Gold's Horseradish dynasty.

Or consider this Jewish-grandmother story, from New York restaurateur Eddie Schoenfeld:

> My grandmother made a great Friday-night dinner in her two-story limestone in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. She might as well have run a restaurant. There was lots and lots and lots of stuff—*kreplakh*, *gribenes*, gefilte fish, blintzes, homemade noodles, roast chicken, glazed carrots, egg barley with dried Polish mushrooms. In 1918 during an influenza epidemic my grandmother was twenty years old with two children. First her husband died and two days later her mother died. With eight younger siblings and two of her own she took care of ten kids in the family. Then an aunt caught the flu and died leaving eight or nine children. My grandmother then married her uncle and raised eighteen kids.

Shorter reminiscences—of growing up Syrian-Jewish in California, of a mother who forbade cutting off the root of the onion first lest someone's life be cut short, of a grandmother who, when asked how she made a particular dish, replied "with love"—accompany most recipes.

Jewish Cooking in America may not be a wholly satisfactory replacement for following one's mother around the kitchen, soaking up the folklore along with the recipes, but it comes close. In fact, reading *Jewish Cooking in America* is like nothing so much as going through everybody's grandmother's old photo albums, with a running commentary on the subjects of the pictures and a good meal thrown in.

An American Philosophy

THE PROMISE OF PRAGMATISM: MODERNISM AND THE CRISIS OF KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY. BY JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS. *University of Chicago Press. 515 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by DANIEL J. SILVER

PRAGMATISM and politics—for most people this phrase states a natural enough connection. Politics, after all, is the "art of the possible," involving the necessity of practical compromise, and in this common sense of the word, all politicians are pragmatists.

But pragmatism is also the name given to America's only homegrown philosophical movement, which encompasses figures like William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, and, in our own day, Richard Rorty. Once upon a time, pragmatism in this sense was also intimately associated with politics. Indeed, in the early part of this century, the philosophical pragmatism of John Dewey was the leading non-Marxist theoretical inspiration for legions of liberals and progressives. Having been in eclipse since World War II, pragmatism has been much talked about recently as the basis for a rejuvenated liberalism.

What is pragmatism as a philosophy? The short answer is that pragmatism aims to break away from the perceived need, inherited through more than two millennia of metaphysics starting at least with Plato, to establish foundations or *a priori* rationales for action. In the eyes of pragmatists, the whole his-

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DANIEL J. SILVER *reviewed G. Edward White's biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes in March.*

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tory of philosophy represents one long effort to establish "universals"—indelible, pure truths that do not vary with time or place. For the action-oriented pragmatists, this effort is fruitless and futile; the proper contribution of philosophy should be, rather, to construct a rationale for acting without worrying about whether one's actions are properly "justified" or "grounded" in predetermined notions of what is right and true.

As for what pragmatism as a philosophy has to say to politics, that is not entirely clear. For proponents, it can be a radical call to action, breaking down perceived barriers to communal participation through democratizing the means of "knowing," and thus avoiding reliance on authoritarian elites. For skeptics, it may be just an elaborate rationalization for ignoring truth and history in order to grab the present moment unreflectively.

THE historian John Patrick Diggins grapples with these issues in *The Promise of Pragmatism*, an extraordinarily ambitious work of both analysis and synthesis. Diggins explores here the attraction of the pragmatist viewpoint earlier in the century and asks whether it can be successfully revived to lead us into a new world of democratic politics. Diggins's own perspective is a bit elusive, but it is safe to say that he is skeptical—both on the question of whether pragmatism in its original form was a promising political philosophy and on the prospect that "neopragmatism" will amount to anything more than a fancy rhetorical dress for old, unresolved tensions.

Diggins's book is rewarding in its thoughtfulness and its nuanced presentation of ideas, yet can also be maddeningly difficult and unwieldy. No ordinary intellectual history, it consists largely of extended essays on central figures, whose thinking is "interrogated" by the thought of others through the ages. Thus, James, Dewey, and Rorty are made to match wits with, for instance, Henry Adams, Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen, Reinhold Niebuhr, Charles Beard, and Friedrich Nietzsche, as if they could all shuttle back and forth in some intellectual time machine. As illuminating as these "dialogues" can be, a reader easily becomes disoriented, left without either a narrative or a conceptual compass.

Weaving through the shifting conversations goes a story something like the following. Intellectuals in the late-19th century faced a crisis of modernity. Thanks to the evolutionary theories of Darwin, human history had come to seem bereft of a meaningful pattern, at the mercy of pure contingency. The sense of primal authority that came with religion had been exhausted. How, then, was one to find a justification to act?

For the new pragmatists, authority and the dead weight of history could be as much a drag on the human spirit as an anchor of certainty. What they proposed instead was to relish the living flux of human consciousness and, without forgoing idealism, to explore the world's novelties with the "can-do" spirit of the experimental scientist.

The prototype here was William James (1842-1910), son of a wealthy, oddball amateur theologian and brother to the great novelist, Henry. James began his studies in physiology and the nascent field of experimental psychology before turning to philosophical speculation. Influenced both by his own study of consciousness and by the eccentric polymath genius Charles Sanders Peirce, the most fertile philosophical mind of 19th-century America, James formulated the keynote of the new philosophy that he and Peirce called "pragmatism" in two related ideas: "radical empiricism" and the "will to believe."

For James, the human mind actively reconstitutes perceptions, mixing and matching impressions of the objective world in its own creative synthesis: we are all artists in consciousness, remaking the world in the very act of encountering it. As a corollary, James felt that if we only embraced the "will to believe"—that is, acknowledged the plastic, creative power of our own minds—we could learn to control the world to good ends.

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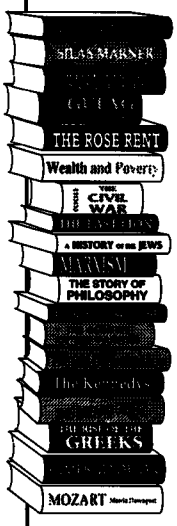

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ded intellectual, James was not a political philosopher in the sense of one who translated his ideas into a framework for public action. It was left to John Dewey (1859-1952) to expand on some of those ideas and link them to a forceful communitarian ethic. Like James, Dewey began with the primal fact of the mind's freedom; but he built on James's "radical empiricism" in his concept of "experience," a catchall expression for the way human consciousness changes the world in the act of trying to understand it.

Dewey's stress on the immediacy of experience led him to a militant rejection of history as a guide to action. History, he thought, was just the record of contingent events past and told us nothing about how to act in the present; this we could only know *by* acting. For Diggins, this conception of knowledge through experience courted a paradox that came back to haunt Dewey when he gave advice about political challenges in the real world. For if one cannot know until one acts, then one must approach every moment of decision with a certain willful blindness.

Politically, what rang the death knell for Dewey was his advice that the United States stay out of the war with Hitler on the grounds that fighting it would hamper the march of social progress at home. As Diggins wryly observes, Dewey here ignored his own command to ignore history, interpreting the social repressiveness that had overtaken America during an earlier conflict, World War I, as a sign that war should be avoided at all cost. In any case, the move alienated Dewey from his liberal and radical friends, who saw him as betraying the "popular front" against fascism, and it marked the beginning of the end of his influence.

As DIGGINS notes, pragmatism's fortunes generally declined by the 1950's. Within the academic discipline of philosophy, it was overshadowed by the rise of language-oriented philosophy—the tradition of Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, and Ludwig Wittgenstein—which took over American philosophy with a vengeance. But then came Richard Rorty, at first an epigone of the linguistic school, who shucked off its influence and called for a renewal of public-spirited philosophy that would once again address the big social and political issues. In the 1970's Rorty began his assault on the philosophical establishment through a revival of Dewey.

Rorty has used Dewey's ideas to reinforce his own belief that philosophy goes badly astray when it seeks some indefeasible definition of truth. But whereas Dewey looked to science as an escape from the constraints of authority and history, for Rorty science is part of the problem.

Modern philosophy, he writes, is in thrall to a model of knowledge derived from scientific realism—the doctrine that from well-grounded empirical observations one can build up a rock-solid picture of reality. Rorty proposes instead that the most philosophy can aim for are provisional statements, suggestive fictions: philosophers are, or should be, more like novelists, aspiring only to a certain local coherence of texture and rhetorical power, with no pretense to offering a "true" description of the world.

Politically, this vision coincides with a noncoercive communitarian ethic, in which no one is bound by a rigidly enforced set of conditions concerning morals or politics. In Rorty's view, we Americans are likely to achieve solidarity if we refrain from imposing upon our statements the requirement that they satisfy predefined criteria of truth.

Diggins finds Rorty's emphasis on rhetoric and noncoercive conversation to be a rather flaccid substitute for Dewey's stress on action. Watering down Dewey's ideas in order to make them more palatable to the "postmodernist" temper, Rorty merely reformulates the currently fashionable attitude that we cannot know history other than as a congeries of self-serving myths, and thus should not take seriously any positive assertions about the world. For Diggins, Rorty is altogether too content to reduce politics to talk. Unlike Dewey's, his lib-

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eralism is essentially negative, attempting to free up "conversation" about social ills rather than committing itself to a program of action or even principles.

So WHERE does Diggins himself stand? Like the curmudgeon historian Henry Adams, with whom he seems to identify too closely for his own health, Diggins is caught between a spiritual longing for that old-time religion—in his case, the "religion" of the early progressives and cultural radicals—and a modern, Rorty-like skepticism that finds all assertions questionable. Like Dewey (and Rorty), he seems to yearn for a new communal spirit in our political culture; yet he is too respectful of the Founders' jaundiced view of unchecked human passion to accept communitarianism as a new form of liberal political philosophy.

In short, Diggins is caught in the dilemma of modern liberalism, to whose tortured legacy he has devoted many commendably candid and erudite books, this one among them.

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Doomsayers

THE GREEN CRUSADE: RETHINKING THE ROOTS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM. BY CHARLES T. RUBIN. *Free Press. 312 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY MARSH

CHARLES T. Rubin grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, where in the early 1960's chimneys belched black smoke into the air, waste pipes discharged raw sewage into a "dying" Lake Erie, and the murky Cuyahoga River actually caught fire. In the fifth grade, Miss Spere, "one of the best teachers I ever had," introduced Rubin to the fledgling science of ecology. Not surprisingly, Rubin became a junior environmentalist, more eager to celebrate a friend's birthday by touring a local sewage plant than by going to a bowling party.

Three decades later, as an associate professor of political science at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Rubin, having dropped out of the green movement, has become one of its toughest critics. In *The Green Crusade*, he offers an analysis of the movement's continuing public appeal and astonishing political success.

That success is owed in part, he argues, to a handful of gifted popularizers—Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, and Paul Ehrlich among them—who have peddled their exaggerated accounts of an imperiled environment as scientific fact, and achieved celebrity in the process. Then, too, outbreaks of ecological hysteria, such as those surrounding the unnecessary evacuations of Love Canal and Times Beach, have been fostered and exploited by environmentalists in their campaign for an ever-enlarging system of governmental regulations; that system has by now become so complex and far-reaching that even lawyers for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concede that compliance with it is impossible. Finally, as atmospheric pollution and other hazards have receded, green activists and the expanding cadre of bureaucrats aligned with them have discovered new but largely hypothetical dangers, like the greenhouse effect, to sustain the sense of crisis and impending environmental doom.

Rachel Carson pioneered environmentalism's successful promotional techniques in her best-selling *Silent Spring* (1962). Her "fanatical attacks on DDT and modern chemical technology," Rubin writes, were the genesis of today's widespread phobia about man-made chemicals. According to *Silent Spring*, the broad application of synthetic chemicals threatens the supposedly delicate "balance of nature" because natural recovery mechanisms are too slow to cope with man-made changes. This argument remains a centerpiece of environmental rhetoric today, even though it is flawed on at least two grounds.

For one thing, Carson fortified her impassioned attack on chemicals with misleading citations from the scientific literature. Indeed, comparing the original research with Carson's account of it, Rubin finds a pattern of distortion and misinterpretation that consistently magnifies the negative effects of pesticides and ignores their widespread benefits. For another thing, it is glaringly obvious, as Rubin points out, that common natural phenomena such as volcanoes, earthquakes, and fires are more intensely and speedily destructive than virtually any human activity short of nuclear war.

ANOTHER prominent ecologist with a talent for mixing dubious science and catchy phrasemaking is Barry Commoner, who ran for President on the Citizens' party ticket in 1980. In his book, *The Closing Circle* (1971), he argued that man was destroying nature by violating the so-called Four Laws of Ecology: "Everything is connected to everything else"; "everything must go somewhere"; "nature knows best"; and "there is no such thing as a free lunch." When pressed, Commoner admitted that the term "laws" for these pronouncements

JEFFREY MARSH *writes on science for* COMMENTARY *and other publications.*

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did not meet the rigor normally expected of science. In *The Poverty of Power* (1976), a tract written during the energy crisis of the 1970's, Commoner drew upon thermodynamics in a similarly loose way to "demonstrate" that profit-blinded businessmen would inevitably favor inefficient energy sources over cleaner and cheaper but less profitable technologies like solar power, thereby precipitating Karl Marx's final crisis of capitalism.

Given his suspicion of the profit motive, it should come as no surprise that Commoner still believes the ultimate solution to environmental problems lies in a marriage of advanced technology and central planning, presided over by an elite corps of experts. As Rubin observes, the flip side of this faith in elites is the belief—universal among green crusaders—that ordinary people left to their own devices are unable to determine their best interests.

The latter-day Malthusian Paul Ehrlich is another who subscribes to this belief. Ehrlich has for decades been decrying the tendency of human beings to reproduce themselves in numbers that exceed the level he deems desirable. In *The Population Bomb* (1968), he argued that the world was already overpopulated, a state of affairs that nature would inevitably correct in the near future by famine, disease, and war unless drastic steps were immediately taken to reduce population growth. Unfortunately for Ehrlich, he has had to revise his book several times since it was first published because mortality rates have dropped significantly in the very locations where he warned that disaster was most imminent.

Despite his career of false prophecy, Ehrlich continues to advocate a program of intensive propaganda to persuade all right-thinking Americans to "stop at two." Other alarmists dissected in Rubin's book are less inhibited about expressing their preference for more authoritarian methods. Garret Hardin, for example, author of the famous and frequently anthologized essay "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968), concludes that the only moral solution to

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soaring birth rates and overpopulation is "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon," a concept which Rubin appropriately characterizes as "politically terrifying."

The environmentalists' disdain for the intelligence and, indeed, the worth of ordinary human beings is taken to its highest pitch by the so-called "deep ecologists." Ascribing no greater value to human beings than to any other life form on earth, deep ecologists—or those inspired by them—have been known to carry out acts of eco-terrorism like sinking metal spikes into tree trunks so that unwary lumberjacks face injury or death when their chainsaws disintegrate.

For Rubin, the extremes reached by the deep ecologists serve to illuminate the true wellspring of environmentalism, which is not love of nature but fear, or perhaps even hatred, of *human* nature. So inspired, the green crusaders would remake and regulate every single aspect of our economic and social lives, from the amount of garbage we throw out to the number of children we produce.

To anyone familiar with 20th-century history, it is depressing but perhaps not altogether surprising that utopian schemes involving massive expansions of state power should continue to capture the imagination of large sectors of the intellectual and political classes. Things being as they are, it is perhaps also not surprising that the current Vice President of the United States should be a spokesman (however ineffective) for the radical environmental Left. As green utopianism continues to score victories in the political arena, Rubin worries that we will all find ourselves increasingly threatened by the specter of massive coercion in the pursuit of its objectives.

One hopes that he is wrong, and that environmental extremism will eventually succumb to the contradictions and outright prevarications upon which it rests—and which he has so skillfully exposed. But his examination of the roots of environmentalism suggests otherwise, pointing as it does to a more troubling phenomenon still: the continuing refusal of America's intellectual and policy elites to accept that the world cannot be reshaped at will to meet their specifications. This particular delusion seems impervious to refutation—not by books, however good they are, and not even by experience.

Man of the 30's

REBELLIONS, PERVERSITIES, AND MAIN EVENTS. By MURRAY KEMPTON. *Times Books. 570 pp. $27.50.*

Reviewed by TERRY TEACHOUT

MURRAY KEMPTON, the dean of American newspaper columnists, is mostly unknown to readers—younger ones, at any rate—outside New York. His column, launched in 1949 and currently published in *New York Newsday*, is spottily syndicated; he has produced just four books (two of them, the present one included, being collections of essays, articles, and reviews); and he rarely lectures or appears on TV. His only other claim to literary celebrity is as a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, a berth that does not exactly make its occupant a household word.

Yet Kempton is greatly esteemed by one particular group of readers: his peers. He won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for commentary. Last year, he was the subject of a *New Yorker* profile by David Remnick. *Rebellions, Perversities, and Main Events*, his new book, is festooned with blurbs from Remnick ("The best since Mencken"), Joan Didion ("Close study of [this book] should supplant enrollment in graduate schools of journalism"), and Elizabeth Hardwick ("Enlightened, intelligent, illuminating"). No doubt it would sport a blurb from William F. Buckley, Jr., one of Kempton's biggest fans, were it not for the fact that the book is dedicated to Buckley. Also conspicuous by his absence from the dust jacket is Jimmy Breslin, who once claimed that Kempton "has brought more honor to newspapers than anyone in my lifetime." Clearly, Murray Kempton is a journalist whom more successful colleagues like to admire.

Why is such a paragon so little known to the public at large? One reason is that Kempton writes frequently, if not mainly, about local matters. Another is that his prose is notoriously gassy, at times to the point of incoherence. (Here is Kempton on the death of Thurgood Marshall: "Memories come back to uplift the hearts of old men with powers to exhilarate that reside far less often in the recollection of grandeurs than of struggles.")

Then there is Kempton's quirkiness. Though he writes as a liberal, his frequent attacks of heterodoxy make him difficult to pigeonhole. "The Underestimation of Dwight D. Eisenhower" (1967), reprinted here, is a quintessential example of Kempton's ability to rethink conventional wisdom without lapsing into reflexive contrarianism. Equally trenchant is his no-nonsense verdict on Leonard Jeffries, the professor of black studies at New York's City University known for his bizarre racial theories and his anti-Semitism:

> What in the end is a black-studies department except the consignment of students of color to a separate and unequal system of education, with standards abysmally inferior to Tuskegee's and with a teacher like Jeffries who owes his eminence to college administrators who think him no worse than his classroom deserves? . . .

Yet to call Kempton unpredictable, as his fans inevitably do, is to misunderstand him. Like most "unpredictable" thinkers, he is perfectly consistent when seen from the correct angle. In Kempton's case, that angle is easily defined: born in 1917, he remains a man of the 30's. He is intensely class-conscious (which is probably one of the reasons his fellow journalists admire him so much). He sees the modern civil-rights movement through the misty eyes of a man

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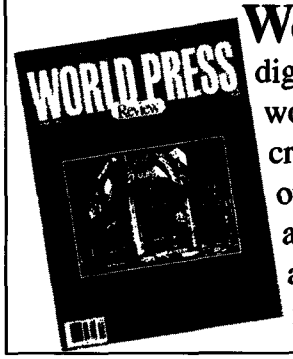

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who knows well how hard it was for blacks in the 30's. And he still has an essentially romantic view of 30's radicalism.

Romantics are people who, no matter how clearly they see, are more interested in what they feel. This fits Kempton to a tee. After an early brush with Communism, he became an anti-Stalinist, and has never had any illusions about totalitarianism, whether in practice or in theory. Yet he has remained a man of the Left, and his vision of the 30's is still that of one who remembers how it felt to be certain that the world had to be remade, and whose old age is warmed by the memory of that certainty. This goes a long way toward explaining Kempton's belief, which he has expressed at regular intervals over the past four decades, that we should forgive the radicals of the 30's their involvement with Communism.

Kempton is never crudely ideological. He is quick, for instance, to assail the moral deficiencies of leftists whose purely intellectual failings he finds excusable. (*Rebellions, Perversities, and Main Events* contains some exceptionally sharp words about the "shallowness" of the middle-class radicals of the 60's.) But early in the McCarthy era he became convinced that the "honor" of the radicals of the 30's could only be preserved by their refusing to cooperate with the congressional investigators who were subpoenaing them. Again, this is by no means an unnuanced view; Kempton is one of the few defenders of Alger Hiss who has written with equal sympathy about Whittaker Chambers. In the end, though, it is the Hisses and Lillian Hellmans whom he admires most, for having stood pat and for refusing to "name names":

> There come times when you have to go into capital, and be ready to face up to the loss of a lot, because you are wise enough to sense that the alternative is to lose everything. You will get through, and there will be a time to come when all that will be remembered about you is whether or not you gave the names.

But there is, in fact, much more to be remembered about certain radicals than whether or not they "named names" in the 50's before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Well-informed about the horrors of totalitarianism though Kempton is, he is sometimes prone to cull from the history of the 30's those episodes that jibe with his idiosyncratic conception of honor, and to gloss over everything else. To praise Alger Hiss for standing pat is to ignore the damage done by his standing pat (not least to Whittaker Chambers); to dismiss 30's radicalism as an excrescence of youthful idealism is to ignore the fact that many of those who professed it were in no conceivable way idealistic.

AT TIMES, Kempton actually seems to believe that there was little at stake in the cold war. "One small loss in an existence more and more deprived of the joys of the harmlessly ridiculous," he wrote a few years ago, "is the shortening supply of Westerners who have seen the future and think it works." One may doubt that many Russians regarded such Westerners as harmless; Solzhenitsyn certainly did not. But the Left-liberal culture from which Kempton springs spent the better part of the 20th century seeking to whitewash the Soviet Union, an undertaking which has—incredibly—outlived the fall of Communism itself. There are still plenty of professors at American universities who regard the existence of the Soviet purges (or the guilt of Alger Hiss) as a matter of opinion. Kempton is assuredly not of their number, but he elides a great deal of very dark history when he urges us yet again to forgive the radicals of his youth.

In one of the most characteristic essays reprinted in *Rebellions, Perversities, and Main Events*, Kempton compares Harry Truman unfavorably to Henry Wallace:

> There are different sorts of foolishness, but we can be fairly certain that on the whole we have been damaged less by politicians like Wallace who vaporize human events into some "millennial and revolutionary march toward manifesting here on earth the dignity that is in every human soul," and who dream of peoples singing to peoples, than by politicians like Truman who concretize all problems into formulas like "Dean, we got to stop the sons of bitches no matter what," and who dream of dealing as Number One to Number One.

Considered solely as a character analysis of two politicians, this passage is shrewd and perceptive. Yet its subtleties become trivial when one pulls back far enough to compare the actual accomplishments of Wallace and Truman. Therein lies the flaw in Murray Kempton's view of the world. His understanding of the psychology of American radicalism is profound; his recognition of the complexity of human motivation is astute. But a commentator who so often chooses to paint the world in shades of gray constantly teeters on the edge of suggesting that there is no difference between black and white.

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